Situation report: severely fouled vessel directed to immediate dry-dock

Recently a vessel en route for New Zealand Territory was flagged as a high-risk for biofouling. The vessel operator intended to spend several months in New Zealand waters before going into dry-dock to be cleaned. The vessel was flagged as high-risk based on information provided in the vessel's Advanced Notice of Arrival and the Biofouling and Ballast Water Declaration. The vessel was flagged as high risk for biofouling due to the high number of port visits, the number of long periods idle in port and the intended length of stay, among other factors.

Upon entry to a South Island Port the vessel underwent a dive inspection at the request of MPI. This inspection confirmed the presence of severe biofouling. Following the discovery of the biofouling, the vessel was directed to leave the port within 24 hours, and travel outside New Zealand's 12 nautical mile (nm) limit, via the most direct route possible to its scheduled dry-dock location, the timing of which was brought forward. The 12nm distance was enforced to keep the vessel off the continental shelf, therefore minimising exposure to coastal marine habitats where foreign marine species found within biofouling are most likely to survive, and establish a population. In-water cleaning or treatment was not recommended based on the nature and extent of biofouling.

MPI was present to oversee the dry dock and cleaning process. Particular care was taken to clean all niche areas (where biofouling was the most extensive). The vessel has now received biosecurity clearance and can continue with its planned itinerary.

The vessel agent had made the vessel Master aware of New Zealand's biofouling requirements and recommended that the vessel be cleaned before travelling to New Zealand. Any costs associated with the dive inspection, dry-dock and delays to the vessels schedule must now be met by the vessel owner or operator. Earlier this year a bulk carrier was turned away from New Zealand because it had severe biofouling. Due to the size of the vessel, dry-dock was not an option.

New Zealand's new Biosecurity rules: The Craft Risk Management Standard for Biofouling

To manage the risk of invasive marine species establishing in New Zealand waters, the Ministry for Primary Industries issued the Craft Risk Management Standard for Biofouling on Vessels. These rules require all vessels to arrive in New Zealand with a "clean hull". The CRMS will become mandatory for all vessels entering New Zealand in May 2018. MPI is encouraging vessels to use this time to establish best practice management. Until this time, MPI can take action on vessels which pose a severe biofouling risk.

If you would like to know more about the requirements, including how best to comply, visit the MPI website: http://www.mpi.govt.nz/importing/border-clearance/vessels/biofouling-management/, or contact standards@mpi.govt.nz

Why are we taking action?

Foreign marine species most commonly arrive in New Zealand waters on international vessels as biofouling (the growth on underwater surfaces of vessels). Of 187 foreign marine species recorded as being established in New Zealand, 75% are likely to have arrived as vessel biofouling. Once established here, some species can have severe economic impacts and damage New Zealand's marine environment. Vessel biofouling also plays a major role in the subsequent domestic spread of foreign marine species. This includes dispersal from ports to pristine world heritage areas which must be protected, such as Fiordland National Park.