



APF Project Web Summary

Project Title:	Guidance for Aquaculture Monitoring in the Waikato Region
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Summary

Waikato Regional Council is currently developing a guidance document for the aquaculture industry and other stakeholders in its region. The document aims to provide clear information on environmental monitoring requirements for aquaculture consents, as well as a methodology for integrating consent and state of the environment monitoring. The document will include a review of monitoring approaches in other New Zealand regions and overseas. While developed specifically for the Waikato region, the guidance document, which is due for release mid 2014, will contain useful information and principles of relevance to other regions.

The Opportunity

Marine farming has known environmental effects that need to be monitored and managed well to provide for environmentally sustainable aquaculture growth. Waikato Regional Council is developing a regional environmental monitoring framework to successfully manage the level of environmental change associated with the upcoming development of fish farming and the anticipated increase in shellfish farming in the region. This is a holistic approach, which will incorporate State of the Environment monitoring, consent monitoring and predictive modelling. The approach is designed to assist new and existing aquaculture by providing clear guidance on environmental quality objectives, monitoring and reporting methods and standards for the Waikato region.

The outcomes of this project will be a draft guidance document for the aquaculture industry and other stakeholders providing clear information on environmental monitoring requirements for aquaculture consents in the Waikato region. This draft document will be disseminated to wider stakeholders for consultation before being finalised.



Intended Outcomes

Contribution to the Government's strategic goals and objectives for aquaculture

This project contributes to and supports the Government's Aquaculture Strategy goals and objectives by developing a monitoring framework and guidance for aquaculture monitoring in the Waikato region. This project has a very practical focus. The project team includes scientists, council planning and consenting staff to ensure that the outcomes are practicable and directly relevant to the consenting process. The final outcome will be a guidance document designed primarily for the aquaculture industry that will provide clear guidance on aquaculture monitoring requirements for resource consents in the Waikato region.

This project will develop best practice guidance for consent processing, consent conditions and information requirements to promote regional consistency. It focuses on the Waikato region but it is very likely that some of the outcomes, e.g. consent conditions, monitoring designs or environmental standards, can be further developed into best practice guidance on a national level.

The project will lead to scientifically robust monitoring of the environmental effects of aquaculture activities in the Waikato region and consequently improve our knowledge of these effects. Also, being able to confidently assess environmental effects will assist decision-making and provide assurance to the community.

The Government created a new marine farming zone (Coromandel Marine Farming Zone) for finfish farming through the 2011 Aquaculture Legislation Amendment Bill (No.3). This project will support the development of this space, as well as the fish farming space allocated in the Wilson Bay Marine Farming Zone, by providing certainty to potential marine farmers on the environmental monitoring requirements.

Aquaculture New Zealand aims to increase sales to \$1 billion per annum within an environmentally sustainable framework. This project supports this aim by providing the mechanism needed to assess and ensure environmental sustainability of aquaculture growth in the Waikato region.

Economic benefits

The economic benefits of this project will arise through a more informed expansion and diversification of aquaculture. While they are difficult to predict, benefits of the new monitoring framework are likely to be substantial and will include reduced conflict, increased certainty of requirements, less time required to develop standards during the consent process, and less time required to assess consent applications and monitoring results by council. This is likely to considerably reduce the costs of resource consent applications for industry.

Another benefit for the aquaculture industry will be the more effective management of biosecurity risks, which will reduce the risk of adverse effects on the industry from unwanted pests or diseases.

The project will also contribute to a more informed and thus more cost-effective process around future aquaculture developments.



Achieving good environmental outcomes

The project will facilitate the sustainable growth and diversification of aquaculture in the Waikato region within a framework focused on minimising environmental risk.

Environmental effects of consented activities are best managed if environmental monitoring is aligned with broader SOE monitoring and if environmental quality standards are established prior to the commencement of the consented activity so that consent monitoring can be designed to verify compliance with these standards.

Furthermore, having well-designed environmental quality standards and monitoring approaches at the time of consent applications is imperative for designing meaningful adaptive management strategies for a marine farm consent.

The project team for this project includes research scientists and council science, planning and consenting staff. This project will produce a guidance document for the aquaculture industry and other stakeholders providing clear information on environmental monitoring requirements for aquaculture consents in the Waikato region. As a result the outcome of this project will be practicable and directly applicable to the resource consenting process.

Consequently the project will help to ensure environmental sustainability during the upcoming development of fish farming and expansion of shellfish farming in the Waikato region. It is also likely that the outcomes of this project can be adjusted for other regions.

Methods

The first year of this project focuses on reviewing current monitoring approaches, reviewing relevant consents, including the New Zealand King Salmon EPA application, assessing the locally relevant ecological effects and their significance and developing the structure for the monitoring framework. In the second year the focus will be on developing standards for marine farms in the Waikato region, utilising all available data, developing the detailed methodology for integrating consent and SOE monitoring and writing the guidance document.