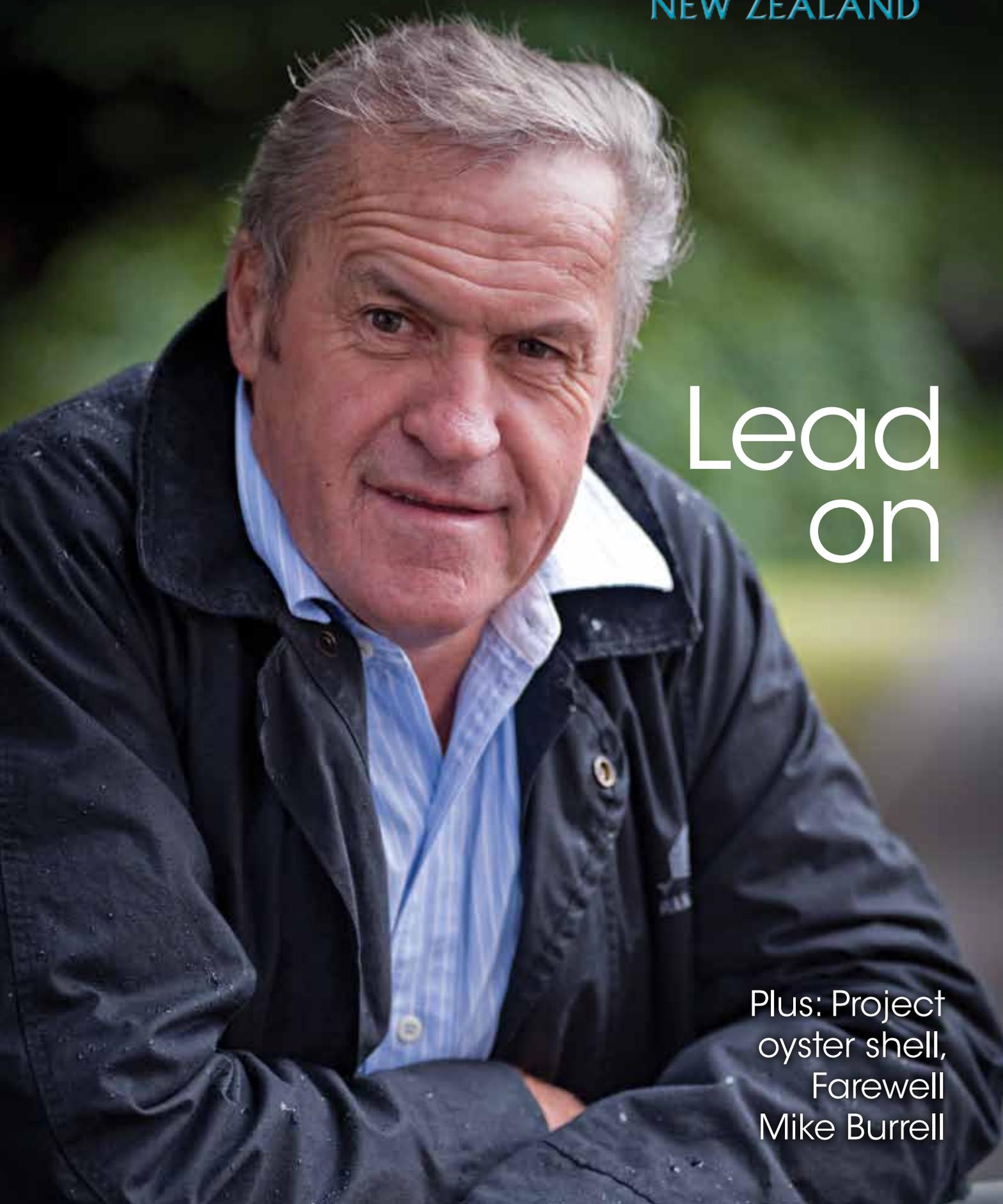


March 2011

# AQUACULTURE

NEW ZEALAND



Lead  
on

Plus: Project  
oyster shell,  
Farewell  
Mike Burrell



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# News in brief



## Mike Burrell moves on

Aquaculture New Zealand founding CEO Mike Burrell officially finishes in the role on March 29 after five years at the helm. Mike led the development of the New Zealand

Aquaculture Strategy in 2006, before going on to found the new industry organisation the following year.

Mike is moving to Wellington to take up a position with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

See Mike's final word on Page 10.

## Mussels' best year yet

The 2011 calendar year was a monumental one for the sector as mussel exports broke all previous records.

Statistics show it was the biggest year to date for Greenshell Mussel exports by value and tonnage.

Export volume reached 38,143 tonnes with a value of \$218.1million. Relative to 2010 figures, this represents a 12 per cent increase in volume and a 27 per cent increase in value.

The increase in exports is largely across all product formats and the substantive increase in value is principally fuelled by the firmer and stable market pricing for frozen halfshell. Exports of frozen half-shell mussels were up 15% in volume and 40% in value.

## New farm applications

There are 10 resource consent applications currently lodged with councils awaiting RMA decisions.

Approximately 30 more applications are expected in Coromandel resulting from changes to the Waikato regional coastal plan in the 2011 legislation.

## Submissions delayed on NZKS application

Public submissions on New Zealand King Salmon Company's new farm applications in the Marlborough Sounds are likely to open in April.

The tentative March submission dates were delayed

after the Board of Inquiry hearing the proposal requested more information.

## SFF recipients announced soon

Applicants for the MAF Sustainable Farming Fund will learn of their fate in the coming weeks.

Official announcement of the winners is expected in early April.

## MSI funding portal open

The Ministry of Science and Innovation is now accepting applications for the Biological Industries Fund.

The fund supports research and projects that focus on sustainable productivity growth of primary industries, and the development of premium food and industrial biological products and technologies responsive to global consumer preferences.

Applications close on April 5.

Go to [www.msi.govt.nz](http://www.msi.govt.nz) for more information.

## Farewell Gillian

Cawthron farewells CEO Gillian Wratt at the end of March.

After six years in the position Gillian has resigned to pursue other interests.

It is expected Cawthron will announce their new CEO in the near future.



## New Zealand Aquaculture Conference

Mark it in your calendar - the 2012 New Zealand Aquaculture Conference will be held in Nelson on November 1-2.

Contact Karen Morley for more information:  
[karen.morley@aquaculture.org.nz](mailto:karen.morley@aquaculture.org.nz)

## The Australasian Aquaculture Conference

The 2012 Australasian Aquaculture Conference will be held in Melbourne, Australia - May 1-4.

Themed 'The Next 10 Years', the 4-day conference will focus on aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific region with presentations from academia, researchers, and industry.  
[www.aquaculture.org.au](http://www.aquaculture.org.au)

## Order market collateral on-line

The New Zealand nurtured seafood website has a function which makes available a suite of collateral items to support the distribution and promotion of New Zealand Greenshell Mussels, King Salmon and Pacific Oysters. Printed versions of the collateral items are available for distributors, restaurants and retailers promoting our products, all they need to do is fill out the online order form specifying their requirements.

More information:  
[www.nurturedseafood.com](http://www.nurturedseafood.com)



Not only do New Zealand King Salmon take the taste of our waters to chefs around the world - they also bring the chefs to our waters to taste the local industry.

NZKS' Australian General Manager Markus Gerlich recently brought a host of top Australian chefs, including Giovanni Pilu and Alesandro Pavoni, to see first hand how their salmon is produced.

"We bring over leading chefs to introduce them to what we do in New Zealand," he said.

"From start to finish - we visit the hatchery, the farms and the processing factories so they get the whole story.

"They see the untouched waters, the good sustainable practices, and the care that goes into each fish - they get a total understanding of what we do and how we do it.

"They're just blown away.

"The story behind the food is massive. King Salmon is a premium product, we're

dealing with premium restaurants, so we want to give them a premium offering.

"These guys are executive chefs, some with their own restaurants, and they're taking four full days away from their restaurants.

"It's a considerable investment from us to bring them over - but a great privilege to host them.

"These guys are very influential chefs who are already using our products - we want them to know the difference of New Zealand King Salmon."

The trip had a big effect on Giovanni.

"I'm glad I saw what I saw," he said. "When serving farmed fish, at the back of your mind you worry that it's been mass produced in a pond.

"These guys do an amazing job.

"I'm not a big fish eater, but from now until the day I die, two meals a week will be New Zealand King Salmon. It's just beautiful." ■



## The man who built his house on a Bed of Mussels

If it was, as the parable goes, a foolish man who built his house on a bed of sand – what of the man who builds his house on a bed of mussel shells?

This is no fable. And this man is definitely not foolish.

This is Nelson's Phil Osborne, an eco-kitchen designer who is pioneering a productive and environmentally friendly use for waste mussel shells that even the gospels would agree is ingenious.

It is believed Mr Osborne is the first person in Nelson, and possibly New Zealand, to have successfully obtained a council building consent to use crushed mussel shells, as an alternative insulation source, in the foundations of his 140m<sup>2</sup> house currently under construction at The Glen.

It's all part of a decade-long crusade to build his own green dream home.

"It's a combination of a lot of years of research into energy efficiency and eco building," he said.

"I've spent two years, researching, designing and putting this through the council.

"Once I settled on the idea, I did the research to get the test reports, which is the most important thing for council."

To satisfy council's building consent conditions, Mr Osborne had to prove the thermal conductivity of the shells.

However with insufficient evidence available in New Zealand Mr Osborne had to look abroad.

To Denmark to be exact.

"Over the internet I found a contact who put me onto a report from the Danish Building Research Institute," he said.

"I had to have it translated into English, but the council have accepted the figures it provided."

Mr Osborne has since used 64m<sup>3</sup> of crushed mussel shells for fill up to 400mm.

He had them delivered in four separate truck loads so he could compact them by hand with a roller.

All up, it's cost \$1300 for the materials and taken longer than normal but he reckons it's worth it.

"Building an eco home is about trying to use as many natural materials as possible, as well as local products and low carbon," he said.

"The mussel shells fit perfectly because they are an abundant local waste product and they work as a form of under-floor insulation where the spaces in between the shells create the insulation value.

"I bought this property 11 years ago and I've spent time living on it in a converted shed, getting to know the property – where the sun is, contours, layout, all the things you can't pick up by visiting every now and again. For solar gain, views, heights, to reduce the amount of energy it takes to heat a house – it's making the best use of the site.

"I hope this inspires people and shows them that it can be done differently." ■



## for the home cook

A new series of recipe concepts will inspire home cooks to create restaurant-quality family meals using our nurtured seafood.

The latest project from Aquaculture New Zealand's market development team saw top Christchurch chef Andrew Brown create nine new recipes to get aquaculture products in kitchens all over the country.

"We focused on creating recipe concepts that are family friendly, that can easily be cooked at home on a reasonable budget and

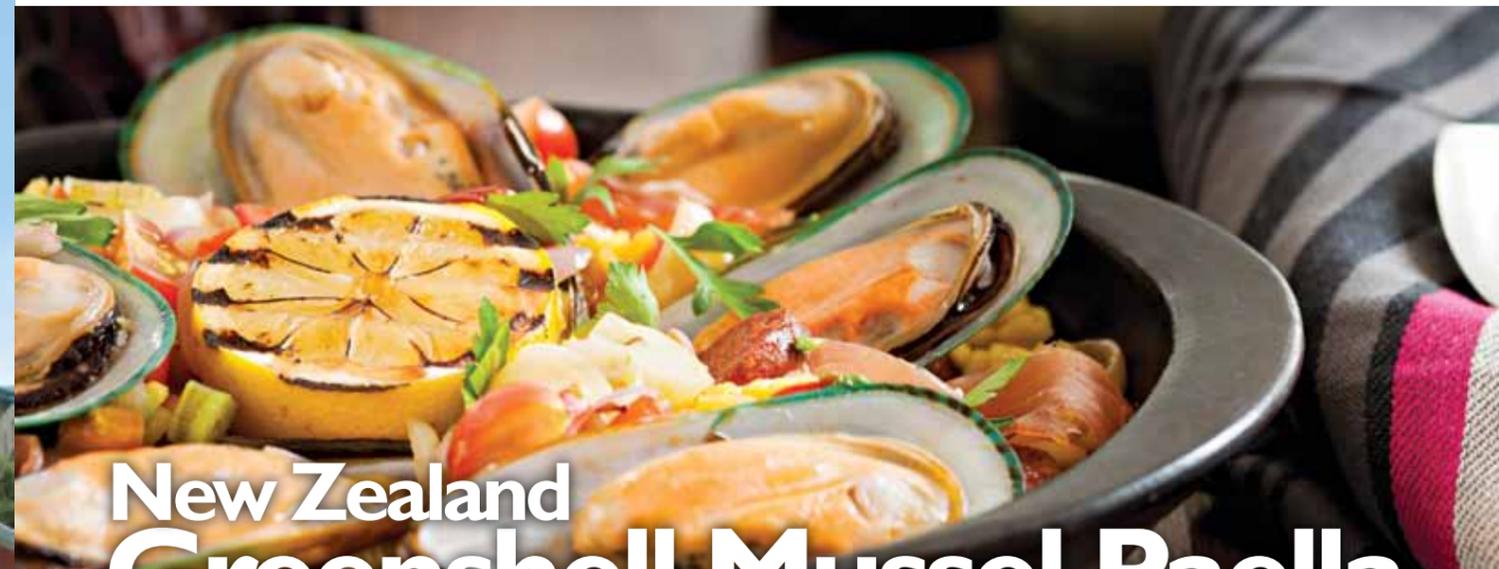
are suitable for the health conscious," said AQNZ marketing manager Casey Marriott.

"We proudly promote the fact that our products are sustainable, healthy and tasty – this is all about showcasing that, in a way that targets domestic consumption."

Each recipe has been professionally photographed and will soon be used as part of Aquaculture New Zealand's market collateral and in promotions with domestic food and lifestyle publications. ■

### Domestic Recipe Collection

- Seafood cocktail with tomato sorbet
- Salmon baked parcels
- Salmon quinoa salad
- Salmon nachos with pita crisps
- Mussel paella
- Salt & pepper mussels
- Mussel/Vietnamese salad rolls
- Mussels with a spicy tomato cream sauce
- Salmon soft shell tacos



## New Zealand Greenshell Mussel Paella

### 4-6 SERVES

### INGREDIENTS

- 100 mls Olive oil
- 150 gms Chorizo (good quality) – sliced into 3-4mm thick rounds
- 6 slices Pancetta or Streaky Belly Bacon
- 1 med size Onion - finely diced
- 4 cloves Garlic - finely diced
- 2 ltrs Chicken Stock (preferably organic)
- 12-16 threads Saffron (good quality)
- 1.5 tsp Smoked Paprika
- 500 gms Paella Rice – see chef's note
- 500 gms NZ Greenshell Mussels (cleaned and debearded)
- 10 Cherry Tomatoes – cut in half
- Small bunch Flat Leaf Parsley, leaves picked and chopped
- Salt & freshly cracked Black Pepper to taste

### METHOD

- In a pot heat the chicken stock & infuse with the saffron.
- Bring a large frying/sauté or paella pan up to heat, add the oil to the

pan & quickly add the sliced chorizo and pancetta or bacon and fry until browned and crispy (quality chorizo will always drop a reddish oil into the pan when cooked – this is a good thing as it is the combination of paprika & pork fat that has rendered out of the chorizo & add flavour to the overall dish) add the onion and garlic and cook until soft.

- Add the smoked paprika, rice and two thirds of the infused stock and leave to cook on a medium to low heat, stirring from time to time.
- After 20 minutes the rice should be almost cooked. At this point, pour in the rest of the stock and add the mussels. Place a lid on the pan and cook for 10 minutes more.
- Finally, sprinkle with chopped parsley and ½ a lemon.

### CHEF'S NOTES:

**PAELLA RICE** – predominantly a short grain rice is used for this dish & most food markets would sell a paella rice, however Valencia rice or Calaspara rice are considered to be the best options.

**VARIATIONS** – Paella is a traditional Valencia Rice dish & has many variations; many other ingredients can be included in this dish including other seafood & chicken. It is a great shared dish & allows a rustic plating style for dinner parties.



Photo courtesy of Nelson Mail

Oyster farmers in the Waikare Inlet are turning 10-years of anguish into a blueprint for a zero-waste industry. Their mission:

# Project Oyster Shell



'Project Oyster Shell', as it's officially known, is a \$3.8 million joint venture between central and local government, Enterprise Northland and oyster farmers to clean up the farms, recycle and sell the waste timber and shells, and clear the way for the region to return to full production within five years.

"It feels like this is the dawn of a new era," Ben said.

"It's been the black sheep of the industry for the last 10 years because it's always been closed.

"This will allow farmers to completely rebuild farms and get back into business, providing jobs locally and further afield in terms of packing etc.

"It includes research to uncover the different products that can be made from the shells themselves...to take it from a waste to something that's worth something.

"And the main benefits, it's going to make oysters a zero waste industry."

The three-year, multi-agency project began with plans to use the shells as a lime source for concrete, after Enterprise Northland Trust's Dr Jacquie Reed set out to find a solution that would mend council-industry relationships, as well as providing a stimulus to the local industry.

"We realised we had a big problem ... and it would be unfair to come in and demand immediate compliance of farms considering they'd had no income for 10 years," Dr Reed said.

"They'd had such a bad experience we sat down and thought 'how can we assist them?'

"There's 25000m3 of waste shell - can we sell it?"

Tests showed they could sell it - the big question became what could they sell it for?

The high-quality of the compounds present in the shells made them rethink the concrete strategy and initiate two Ministry of Science and Innovation funded research projects to develop high-value products suitable for export.

While Dr Reed said the details were confidential, she was optimistic about their potential.

"If this works out at the end of the project, the income from the shells could be a self-sustaining business of its own," she said.

"Potentially, they could end up getting

more money for the shell than for the meat.

"There's a long way to go but we're working towards developing a zero waste industry up here for oysters."

The recycling component of the project secured \$2.1 million of funding under the government's Waste Minimisation Fund, while MAF, Northland Regional Council, Far North Holdings and local oyster farmers are supplying the remaining funds, equipment and time to actually remove the materials from the farms.

Preliminary works began in October, and the project is about to move into full swing with the removal of all waste timber, the building of a reclamation area to process materials, and trial shell removals to be completed within the first year.

Timber that has been preserved under the mud is likely to be re-used in terrestrial farming and the remainder will be reused in another new initiative being investigated with an Auckland-based company.

"The final details are being confirmed but we're engaged with a company who's looking at reusing the wood in a way that meets the strict environmental standards of the Waste Minimisation Fund," Dr Reed said.

When work begins, one of Ben's farms will need 2 hectares cleaned up.

"All the farmers put years and years into their farms and have an emotional attachment to their piece of water.

"It was heartbreaking to see the farms go to rack and ruin.

"It was quite possible it would never re-open, and farmers couldn't afford to keep throwing money at it.

"Everyone had limited funds with no certainty.

"Most farmers have gone off to find other jobs just to make ends meet."

However Project Oyster Shell has the potential to help get the Waikare Inlet up to full speed again.

"Farmers are ready for this," Ben said.

"Everyone's involved and with it 100 per cent.

"It's going to take a while.

"We're looking at 5-7 years to get back into full production."

Dr Reed agrees it's the engagement of all parties that has already made this project a winner.

"The worth here is not just economic benefit or environmental gain from a zero waste industry," she said.

"It's about community.

"This project will redevelop trust between authorities and oyster farmers, giving them a sense of pride, improving well being and creating jobs." ■



Ben Warren



Dr Jacquie Reed and Hon. Dr Nick Smith

In the good times, the Waikare Inlet produced about 1 million dozen oysters per season.

Ben Warren was one of 24 marine farmers, working 59 hectares of leases, employing 60 people in a proud local industry.

Then the tide turned. Bad.

Human effluent from a land-based source leached into the water ways, carrying traces of Norovirus that effectively crippled the industry with a decade-long harvesting ban.

Court cases followed, jobs were lost and farmers went to the wall.

By late 2009 the water quality in the Inlet had improved.

When the harvesting ban was lifted 30 hectares of farms had rotted to rack and ruin

with 25000m3 of shell piled up on the seabed.

But now the tide is turning again and this time it's all good.

The black sheep of New Zealand's oyster family is set to become the white knight, by turning a decade of waste into a new revenue stream and setting a precedent for a zero-waste industry.

# Sea change

With over 30 years of farming in Canterbury, the Minister for Primary Industries Hon. David Carter knows what a New Zealand industry needs to flourish on the world stage. As the new Minister for aquaculture, we asked him for his perspective on the sector.

**Q** Having held Agriculture, forestry and biosecurity under previous portfolios – fisheries and aquaculture must feel like new responsibilities as Minister for Primary Industries – what’s your first impression of the Aquaculture industry in New Zealand.

Since coming into Parliament I have always recognised the huge potential of New Zealand’s aquaculture industry. But during those years I have watched an industry hamstrung by legislation and a substantial anti-aquaculture sentiment. Over the past three years, the National-led Government has worked hard to change this – to free the industry of hurdles and to create an opportunity for the aquaculture industry to reach its full potential. With the most recent aquaculture reforms now being implemented, I believe the aquaculture industry is on the brink of an exciting period of growth.

**Q** What do you see as the greatest challenges for the sector as it pursues its growth targets?

While the foundations for growth are strong, the sector faces particular challenges. The bulk of production comes from the private use of public water space, and has to be authorised by a planning and consenting process that balances and respects other users of that space. For this reason, the steps necessary to establish aquaculture operations differ from many other primary producers. While the recent reforms will ultimately streamline this process, there is still much work to do.

The industry is also faced with high set up costs, and a long wait until a venture becomes profitable. There are also other economic pressures such as fuel costs and exchange rates to deal with, but although these economic

hurdles exist, the opportunities and benefits to be gained from aquaculture are evident.

Issues such as biosecurity will also pose challenges and it is vital that the industry works closely with both MAF (soon to be renamed to Ministry for Primary Industries) and the science sector on developing preparedness plans and educative guidelines to manage these kinds of events.

**Q** What do you see as the greatest opportunity?

The growing world demand for sustainable and safe food products positions the aquaculture industry well for future growth. New Zealand’s marine farmers are free of many of the disease and environmental issues facing other world producers. We have good trading conditions and trade agreements with key and emerging markets. The industry has a great advantage in being able to leverage off the country’s clean, green reputation and our world-leading environmental, food safety, biosecurity and animal health standards to secure strong premiums and market share.

The growing demand in key Asian markets also presents a huge opportunity for the New Zealand aquaculture industry.

Government can remove impediments to growth but it is up to industry to identify and lead opportunities.

**Q** What do you see as the government’s role in the growth of aquaculture in this country over the next decade?

The government’s role over the next ten years will be in supporting the industry to grow and drive towards its own goal of becoming a \$1 billion industry by 2025 – a goal I’m sure we

“Government can remove impediments to growth but it is up to industry to identify and lead opportunities.”

can achieve if we continue to work together. The success of the recent aquaculture reforms will need central Government support, particularly in assisting local authorities with their role in managing sector growth.

This will mean implementing the new law and working with councils and the public to achieve well-planned and sustainable aquaculture growth. Government will ensure the laws and frameworks governing the establishment and operation of aquaculture remain efficient and enable industry development. Delivering on the Crown’s aquaculture settlement obligations to Maori will be critical. And Government will further build on our animal health, welfare, food safety and biosecurity standards.

**Q** The aquaculture reforms included plans for an Aquaculture Strategy – how is that progressing?

Officials at the Ministry of Agriculture and

Forestry are making good progress on the development of a whole of Government strategy for aquaculture. They are working with a range of interested parties, including the industry, to develop a strategy and action plan that will highlight how Government is going to support the industry to achieve its ambitions. I expect to see this strategy in the very near future.

**Q** A key part of the aquaculture reforms was the creation of a Minister of Aquaculture. However the post-election cabinet re-shuffle now sees the sector fall into the wider Primary Industries portfolio – can being a small-part of a large portfolio provide the same representation as a dedicated Minister?

I believe the aquaculture industry has a great future but we must work together to ensure this. One of my priorities, in my new role as Minister for Primary Industries, is to ensure the aquaculture industry has an ongoing

positive relationship with MAF.

Bringing aquaculture and fisheries under the wider MAF umbrella is a logical move. MAF is now a ‘super Ministry’, covering agriculture, biosecurity, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries and food safety. It makes sense to have one Ministry responsible for all our primary industries.

I’m fortunate to have Nathan Guy as Associate Minister and he will be working closely with me across all areas of the portfolio, but with a particular responsibility for forestry.

**Q** Has the role of Aquaculture Unit changed under the new ministry?

The work of the Aquaculture Unit is evolving as the recent legislative change programme has moved from development through to implementation. The Unit remains the Government’s principal adviser on aquaculture issues and is based within MAF’s Resource Management and Programmes

Directorate. MAF is the lead agency on aquaculture across central government and will, by way of the Unit, work closely with the industry, regional government, environmental groups, iwi, and others with an interest in New Zealand’s coastal waters.

The newly merged MAF aims to enable the aquaculture industry to seize appropriate opportunities and to build a sustainable industry that will benefit New Zealand. To accomplish that, the leaders at the Ministry are working to build an organisation that is focused on partnering with and enabling stakeholders.

**Q** Are you satisfied with the volume of applications for new space since the law change?

I am very pleased with the number of applications that have been received since the law change – this shows that the reforms support sustainable aquaculture development.

Applications exist for 500 hectares of space, and for different species. There has also been a decision made on a 0.25 hectare experimental site – this tells me that the industry is starting to really think about which species will work, and where.

There are 10 resource consent applications currently lodged with councils awaiting RMA decisions. Approximately 30 more applications are expected in Coromandel resulting from changes to the Waikato regional coastal plan in the 2011 legislation.

**Q** Having established New Zealand’s first commercial cattle embryo transplant company and played a key role in establishing the Simmental, Charolais and Limousin breeds here and in Australia, you have great insight into benefits of selective breeding – How important do you see selective breeding programmes – like SPATnz – for New Zealand’s aquaculture industry?

Hugely important. There are clearly great benefits to selective breeding for consistently high value product and supply. Programmes such as the SPATnz programme – a collaboration between the Government and Sanford, Sealord Group and the Wakatu Incorporation – will provide significant economic and environmental returns.

While the mussel industry is currently reliant on harvesting wild spat to grow out, the selective breeding programme will provide the larger, uniform sized mussels with a consistency of supply that markets demand. ■



In his final days as Aquaculture New Zealand CEO, Mike Burrell reflects on his time in the industry. As is characteristic of his time in the sector, Mike has...

# The last word

In July 2006 I was at the launch of the New Zealand aquaculture strategy surrounded by the great and the good of New Zealand's marine farming industry. To be honest, I was feeling a little smug – proud of what I thought 'I' had achieved in pulling together this strategy.

I leaned over to a well-known industry figure and said 'what do you think?' He fixed me with a steely gaze and said 'you might have fooled the rest of them but I know you've just borrowed our watch, told us the time and charged us a fiver.'

I was gutted. In that moment I realised that consultancy can never be anything more than reflecting back to people things they already know to be true. So when Peter Vitasovich asked me if I would be interested in leading a new organisation that he and Callum McCallum and others were establishing, I jumped at the chance to follow through and implement the strategy, rather than writing 'just another report.'

Race ahead a year and we're standing on stage at the official launch of Aquaculture New Zealand. Callum leans over to me and says – 'I thought it [the strategy] was just going to be a report – I never thought we'd get this far.'

And that was just the beginning. I feel privileged to have been given the

opportunity to work for this fantastic industry. I can't even begin to tell you how proud I am of the progress you have made collectively over the past five years.

A former boss of mine said to me, 'it's all a waste of time unless you can get the law changed.' After a hell of a lot of hard work by a lot of people, both within and outside the industry, and the support of two successive governments we did just that – we changed the law.

After a lot of advocacy, and championing from companies and government the single largest R&D project in New Zealand's aquaculture history began last year under the name SPAT NZ. This \$50m project will fundamentally change the industry through domestication and selective breeding.

Before I joined the aquaculture sector, I'd worked with a range of other primary industries, which shared the same challenge around achieving scale and market discipline in export markets. I knew this would be a challenge for our sector. But following on from the mussel price collapse in 2008, through the foresight of the Minister of Economic Development and the leadership of our companies, a new opportunity was seized to create a joint venture partnership in the

emerging market of China under the Pure New Zealand Greenshell brand. This project is now being hailed by government as a template for other New Zealand primary export industries.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the leadership, focus and common purpose of the AQNZ chairman and board. Peter V has done an incredible job of pulling this industry together and maintaining the momentum and sense of purpose that was required to implement the growth strategy. The executive and board of AQNZ, provided an inexperienced CEO with the support and guidance he needed in his early years and this support has continued through to this day. I'd particularly like to acknowledge the support of Peter, Callum, Paul Steere, Ted Culley, Mark Gillard, Bruce Hearn, Laws Lawson, and Graeme Coates, as well as my Board, and the support of the regional and species organisations.

From the beginning, I set out to create a different kind of industry organisation. One that would focus on ensuring we gave effect to the strategic direction of our board. To do that I chose people who brought energy, professionalism and passion to the organisation. Nothing we've achieved over the past five years could have been done without

the efforts of the AQNZ staff. Because of these people and the continued leadership at the board table, I am certain this organisation will continue to be the voice of the New Zealand aquaculture sector and will drive the implementation of the growth strategy over the next 15 years.

I will miss the enthusiasm, energy and ability of the people within this industry – from the independent farmers through to the leaders of our largest companies. I know how challenging the past few years have been for everyone, and I would like to thank all our shareholders for getting behind the organisation and making it as successful as it has been.

I will also miss all of the people who support the aquaculture sector – the "aquaculture team" – the scientists, lecturers, planners, engineers, politicians, councillors, government officials, iwi leaders, lawyers – all those who make the aquaculture sector the forward thinking, vibrant and exciting industry that it is.

It has been my great privilege to serve this industry over the last five years and I wish you all every success in achieving your billion dollar goal in what I hope will be much sooner than 2025.

All the very best, Mike. ■

2005

September, 2005: LECG contracted to formulate strategy

2006

July 28, 2006: 10 point plan launched

August 2006: Formation of NZ Aquaculture Ltd Steering Group, (Peter Vitasovich, Ted Culley, Paul Steere, Callum McCallum)

2007

April 17, 2007: First AQNZ Exec Meeting – (Peter, Callum, Ted, Mark Gillard, Bruce Hearn)



June 7, 2007: Aquaculture New Zealand launched



Late 2007: \$6 million secured for Market Development Fund

2008

July, 2008: 1st New Zealand Aquaculture Conference

2010

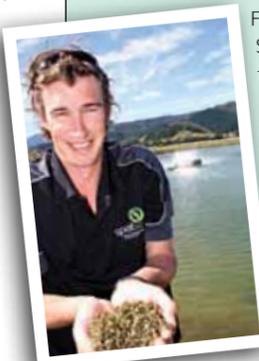


October, 2010: Pure NZ, Joint Venture entry into China

2011

February, 2011: SPATnz \$52.3 Million to domesticate the Greenshell Mussel

October 1, 2011: Aquaculture Legislation Amendment Bill (No 3) has third reading. New laws enacted



## Aquaculture New Zealand moving forward

Working for consultancy firm LECG, Mike Burrell was commissioned to lead the development of an industry strategy in 2005.

The resulting 10-point plan was adopted as the industry's blue print to reach \$1 billion by 2025.

Mike was recruited from LECG to implement the strategy and subsequently was Aquaculture New Zealand's founding CEO.

He has led the organisation for the past five years – a period that has seen dramatic change of the industry's landscape.

"Under Mike's leadership, Aquaculture New Zealand has been able to achieve many of the objectives in the sector strategy. This has included reforming the aquaculture law, increasing investment into R&D, and working with companies to develop key export market opportunities," said Aquaculture New Zealand chairman Peter Vitasovich.

However Peter said Mike was leaving the organisation in a very strong position.

"While it's sad to see Mike go, he leaves the organisation at a good time as we are well prepared to deliver on phase 2 of the industry strategy," he said.

"Aquaculture New Zealand has a small team of dedicated professionals who understand the sector and maintain strong working relationships with shareholders.

"Under the leadership of a very experienced board of directors, the organisation will focus on accelerating growth through six key components:

1. an enabling regulatory environment
2. investment in science and innovation
3. market development
4. focused education
5. uncompromising commitment to environmental sustainability
6. Maori Partnerships. ■