MANAGING COMPETITION FOR COASTAL SPACE BETWEEN AQUACULTURE AND WILD CAPTURE FISHERIES
Introduction

Over last 10 years there has been rapid expansion of aquaculture in New Zealand.

In some regions, aquaculture is now competing with existing fishers for access to limited coastal space.

How we manage the interaction between aquaculture and wild capture fisheries is important.

Ensuring the impacts of aquaculture on existing rights holders are taken into account is consistent with our rights-based fisheries management system.
Aquaculture in NZ

Rapid expansion of aquaculture in NZ

• 12,097 ha of existing marine farms and
• 16,761 ha of applications for new space (most will be processed in next 2 years).

Largest single application is for 4,800 ha

Mostly green-lipped mussels. Some oyster, finfish and abalone farming
Why is so much aquaculture space required

Bivalves are relatively low value compared to other species cultured around the world and large growing areas are needed to be economic

Large market demand for green-lipped mussels in the early 2000s drove applications for large areas of new space

Conflict with other users in sheltered harbours has forced applications offshore. Offshore sites generally not as good growth because of lower food levels and exposure to waves. Also higher costs to maintain structures. And, support infrastructure.

Little research on improving production from existing space.
How does aquaculture affect fishing?

Farm structures can physically impede fishing within and close to the farm boundaries.

Changes to the aquatic environment can affect the ability of an area to support the wild fisheries resources harvested.
Protection of fishers’ existing use and access rights

Government wishes to enable appropriate aquaculture development but recognises that it cannot be at the cost of existing fishing rights holders.

The law provides that new aquaculture can only proceed where there would not be an undue adverse effect on fishing (commercial, customary and recreational)

This is not an absolute protection, but a protection against undue adverse effects
Protection of fishers’ existing use and access rights

What is undue is down to the judgement of the decisions maker.

In essence the decision maker needs to consider the existing fishing activity and relevant catch prior to the aquaculture development compared to the fishing activity and relevant catch likely after the aquaculture development is in place.

Cumulative effects are considered.

Effects generally greater on sessile species.
Example

The challenger scallop fishery has seen some of the most intensive aquaculture development to date

(2,713 ha existing  7,276 ha proposed)
Scallop Model

Annual biomass surveys have been used to model average annual catch losses due to existing and proposed aquaculture development.

- Existing aquaculture losses are just below 5%.
- Proposed aquaculture losses would be 15 to 20%.

You will probably agree that potential losses to the scallop fishery would be significant.

Affected parties are very interested where MFish will draw the “undue” line.
Voluntary agreements with commercial fishers

The undue adverse effects test protects existing rights holders from undue adverse effects on their fishing activities. But does it allow best use of coastal space?

New law allows parties to reach agreement with commercial fishers. But, not customary or recreational fishers.
Voluntary agreements with commercial fishers

The objectives of any trade-off provisions would be to minimise barriers to agreement, minimise bureaucratic processes, provide for allocative efficiency, minimise transaction costs and make no change to consideration of undue adverse effects on fishing.

The most appropriate trade-off mechanism that would meet these objectives is to rely upon voluntary aquaculture arrangements. If a signed agreement involving all affected parties is provided, then development can proceed.
Voluntary agreements

• Agreement with quota owners

• 90% Threshold

• High Court check

• Registration with MFish
Will voluntary agreements work?

• In theory YES (providing aquaculture is a better use)

• In practice we will know in the coming year.

• We will not dictate or interfere what is best use. We have set up a fair process to enable movement from wild fishing to aquaculture.

• We may provide facilitation to help these parties however.