

A scenic coastal landscape featuring a rocky shoreline in the foreground, a calm blue ocean, and a steep, rocky cliffside on the right. The sky is clear and blue. The text 'Kaikōura Marine Guardians Annual Report' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# **Kaikōura Marine Guardians**

## **Annual Report**

**2024**

**2025**

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*Image credit: Clint Trahan*

# Message from the Chair

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## Greetings

After being re-appointed to the Kaikōura Marine Guardians, it is an honour to serve the Kaikōura community by looking after the spectacular marine environment we have. Meeting the new Guardians, I knew the Kaikōura Marine Area would be in good hands. The knowledge and skills we have around the table will serve the community very well. The review has provided the new members with a very good induction into the Kaikōura (Te Tai o Marokura) Marine Management Act and what is expected of them to look after this very special place in Aotearoa.

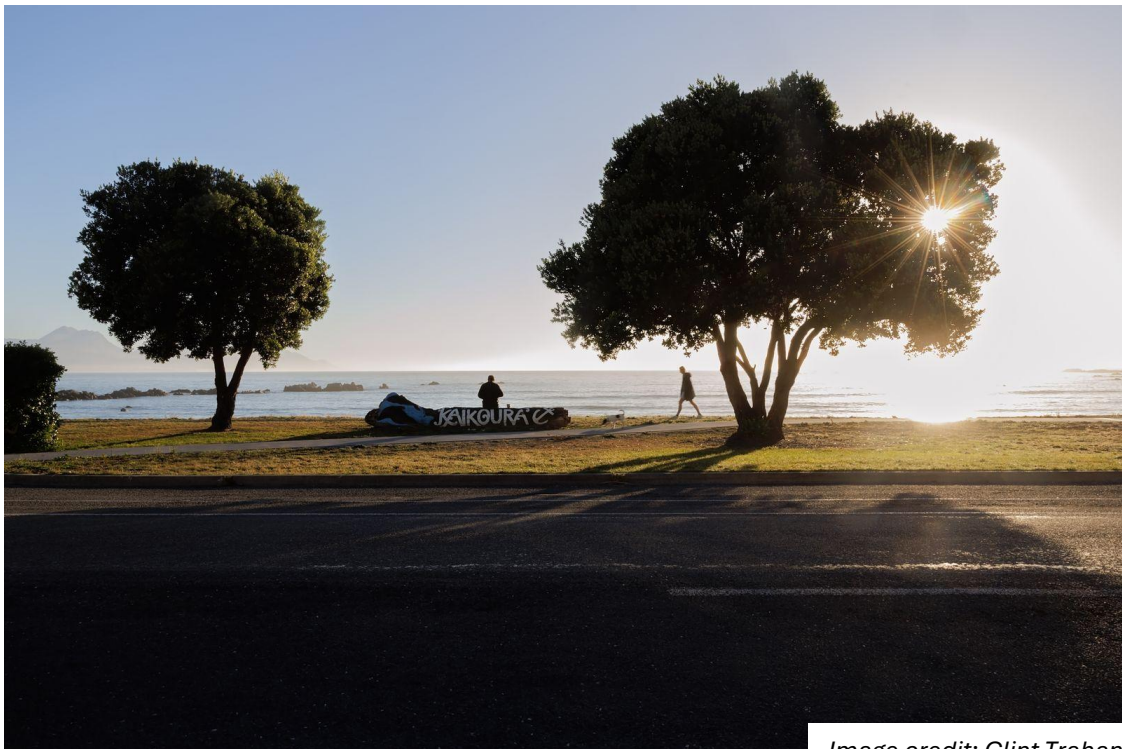
Being elected as Chairman for a second term makes me very pleased that we can look forward to our future with the new Guardians who bring new skills to the table to manage our very dynamic coastline.

I wish to thank the Department of Conservation and Fisheries NZ for their contributions to the administration of the Guardians and for steering us through the ten-year review process.

We do not underestimate the challenges we face in addressing the climate change we are experiencing. We look forward to the community's support in keeping our coastal environment a national treasure.



Larnce Wichman  
Chairman  
Kaikōura Marine Guardians



*Image credit: Clint Trahan*

# Introduction

The Kaikōura Marine Guardians were established under the Kaikōura (Te Tai o Marokura) Marine Management Act 2014 (the Act) and are appointed by the Minister for Conservation and the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries.

The Guardians is a Ministerial Advisory Committee which provides advice on any biosecurity, conservation or fisheries-related matter in respect to the marine and coastal environment within Te Whata Kai o Rakihouia i Te Tai o Marokura – the Kaikōura Marine Area.

The following interests and areas of expertise are collectively represented on the Guardians: Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura, Kaikōura community, biosecurity, conservation, education, environment, fishing, marine science and tourism.

A new Terms of Reference (2024-2028) for the Guardians was agreed by Ministers in and sets out the Guardians' membership and a nomination process.

The membership of the Guardians is up to eleven (11) members as follows:

- One representative of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu; and
- Two representatives of Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura; and
- One representative of the Minister of Conservation; and
- One representative of the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries; and
- Six representatives nominated by the public.

The Act established several marine protection and sustainable fisheries measures in the Kaikōura marine environment.

These include:

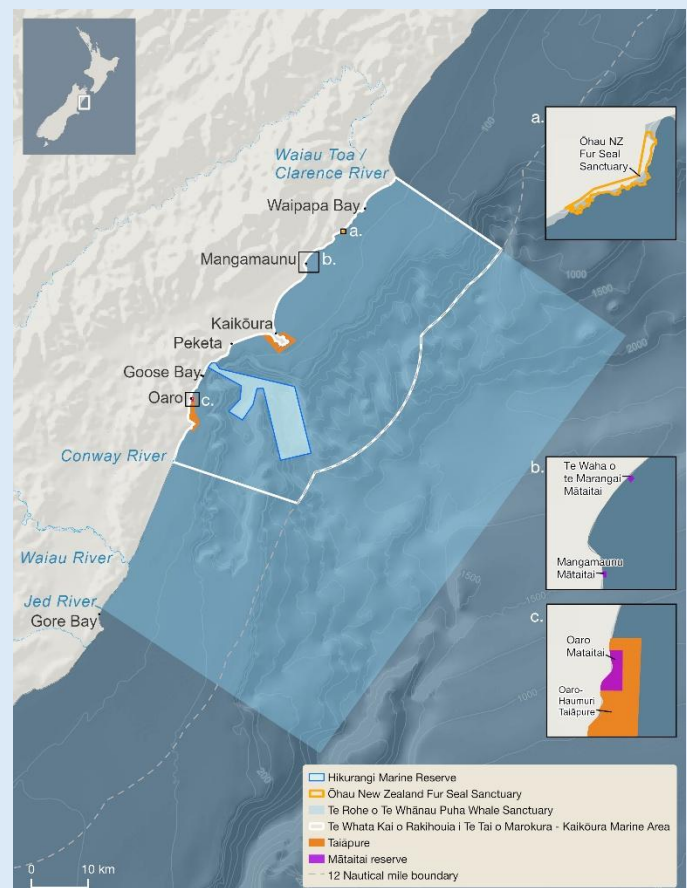
*The **Ōhau New Zealand Fur Seal Sanctuary** to limit human disturbance to fur seals, while allowing the public to view the colony from a safe distance.*

*The **Hikurangi Marine Reserve** that encompasses the Kaikōura Canyon area and connects to the coast south of the Kaikōura Township.*

*The **Te Rohe o Te Whānau Puha Whale Sanctuary** to protect whales and their habitat from the potential risks from seismic survey activities, which benefits the tourism industry.*

*The **Te Taumanu o Te Waka a Maui** and the **Oaro-Haumuri Taiāpure reserves** to provide traditional food gathering areas around the Kaikōura Peninsula that would allow commercial fishing to continue.*

*The **Mangamaunu, Oaro and Te Waha o te Marangi Mātaitai Reserves** where commercial fishing will be prohibited to protect the traditional food gathering areas and to allow recreational fishing.*



# Reserves, sanctuaries, and customary fisheries

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## Hikurangi Marine Reserve

The Hikurangi Marine Reserve encompasses part of the Kaikōura Canyon, which is the most biologically rich ocean habitat known in the world at depths of below 500 metres. The canyon is special for its geological and ecological attributes and is unusually close to shore.

### What protection is in place?

- A marine reserve of approximately 10416 ha, extending offshore for 23.4 km and including 1.95 km of shoreline near Goose Bay, south of the Kaikōura township.
- The reserve encompasses much of the floor and part of the head of the Canyon.

### What marine values are protected?

- All marine life and habitats within the marine reserve are totally protected.
- No fishing, netting, hand gathering, taking or killing of marine life.
- No polluting, disturbance or damage of marine life or the seabed
- No removal of any natural material from the marine reserve.

Recreational and tourism activities (excluding fishing and collection activities described above) are allowed.

The existing launching area at Rosy Morn and a private slipway to the south are unaffected by the reserve and can be used to launch and retrieve boats.

## Te Rohe o Te Whānau Puha Whale Sanctuary

Te Rohe o Te Whānau Puha Whale Sanctuary protects whales and their habitat by reducing or eliminating the potential impacts of seismic survey activities and seabed mining (other than petroleum mining).

### What protection is in place?

- The whale sanctuary covers an area of New Zealand's territorial sea and the Exclusive Economic Zone from the Clarence River, north of Kaikōura, to just north of Gore Bay.
- The sanctuary encompasses 91 kilometres of shoreline and covers an area of 4,686 square km. It extends out beyond the 12 nautical mile limit to a maximum of 56 km from the shore.
- The inner zone of the sanctuary has tighter restrictions on seismic survey activities than the outer zone.
- Seabed mining (other than petroleum mining) is prohibited within the sanctuary.

### What marine values are protected?

- The sanctuary provides greater protection for whales and other marine mammals within the sanctuary boundaries from the potential impacts of seismic survey and seabed mining activities. It minimises the risk of these activities causing whales to change their behaviour, such as moving away from the area, which provides greater certainty of whale locations for tourism operators.

## Ōhau New Zealand Fur Seal Sanctuary

Ōhau Point has the most significant breeding colony for New Zealand fur seals along the eastern coast of the South Island. Fur seals at Ōhau Point are susceptible to human disturbance and this puts them at risk. Seals can be aggressive when disturbed and presents a risk to visitors.

### What protection is in place?

- The seals in the sanctuary area can be observed from a new viewing point/carpark area above the colony.
- A portion of the shoreline and intertidal habitat is a legal sanctuary. Public walking access into the sanctuary at Ōhau Point is prohibited.

### What marine values are protected?

- The restrictions reduce the impacts of humans on the breeding colony and improve compliance and enforcement measures to protect them.
- The colony is legally protected, but the seals are still able to be viewed by the public at a safe distance.

## Customary Fisheries

Specific sites in the Kaikōura Marine Area have been identified as traditional food gathering areas of special significance to Ngāti Kuri.

### What protection is in place?

#### *Mātaitai reserves*

- Three mātaitai reserves to protect the traditional food gathering areas: Te Waha o te Marangai Mātaitai (Mussel Rock), Mangamaunu and Oaro.
- Upon establishment of the mātaitai reserves commercial fishing was prohibited.
- Tangata Tiaki/Kaitiaki (tangata whenua guardians) can recommend changes to the rules in a mātaitai that are required to be approved by the Minister.

#### *Taiāpure-local fisheries*

- Two taiāpure-local fisheries to protect the traditional food gathering areas around the Kaikōura Peninsula and Oaro Blocks/Haumuri Bluff.
- In taiāpure-local fisheries all fishing can continue until changes to fishing regulations are made, as recommended by the Taiāpure Management Committee.

The mātaitai reserves and taiāpure-local fisheries do not affect public access to the beach or marine environment



# Membership and Meeting Attendance

Appointments and re-appointments were made to the Guardians by Ministers in August 2024 for a four-year term, in accordance with the new Terms of Reference agreed by Ministers for 2024-2028.

In February 2025 Larncé Wichman was elected as Chair for a three-year term, providing leadership continuity and stability through to 2028.

Member	Representation	Home	Meetings Attended
Chris Sturgeon		Kaikōura	5
Debbie Walford	<i>Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura representative</i>	Kaikōura	0
Gina Solomon		Kaikōura	5
Larncé Wichman	<i>Minister for Oceans and Fisheries representative</i>	Blenheim	5
Ma-rea Clayton	<i>Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu representative</i>	Christchurch	3
Mark Connor		Canterbury	5
Peter Sutton		Kaikōura	5
Shawn Gerrity	<i>Minister of Conservation representative</i>	Christchurch	5
Tā Mark Solomon		Christchurch	4
Ted Howard		Kaikōura	4
Thomas Kahu	<i>Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura representative</i>	Kaikōura	5

## Meetings

Five Kaikōura Marine Guardians meetings were held between 1 July 2024 and 31 December 2025:

29 October 2024

18 February 2025

20 May 2025

5 August 2025

11 November 2025



# Member Profiles

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## Chris Sturgeon

*Ngāti Kuri, Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki*



Chris Sturgeon is a committed Kaikōura Marine Guardian with a strong commitment to kaitiakitanga and long-term protection of Kaikōura’s unique coastal and marine environment. Having lived in Kaikōura for more than 20 years, Chris brings strong local knowledge and a deep commitment to the community and its natural assets. Chris & his wife Fiona run a small tourism business in Hapuku, just north of Kaikōura.

Chris has an extensive background across financial institutions, government agencies, and private sector consulting, where he has worked in strategic, operational, and advisory roles. His experience in governance, investment, and organisational development provides valuable insight into balancing environmental protection with sustainable economic development.

In addition to his marine guardianship role, Chris is actively involved in the region’s visitor economy and currently serves as Chairperson of Destination Kaikōura, where he helps guide strategic direction for tourism in the district. His work focuses on ensuring that tourism growth aligns with community aspirations and the protection of Kaikōura’s outstanding natural environment.

Through his combined experience in governance, tourism leadership, and business advisory, Chris contributes a pragmatic and collaborative perspective to the work of the Kaikōura Marine Guardians, supporting the ongoing protection and sustainable management of the Kaikōura coastline and marine ecosystems.

## Debbie Walford

Debbie is a representative of Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura on the Guardians. She has been a Tangatatiaki for Kaikōura for over 30 years and has a keen interest in fishing and the environment.

## Gina Solomon

*Ngāi Tahu, Kurahaupo, Ngāti Koata, Te Atiawa, Ngāti Toa*

Gina Solomon is a respected environmental leader, cultural advocate, and long-serving community representative whose contribution has shaped marine and coastal management in Kaikōura for more than two decades.

A passionate conservationist and strategic thinker, Gina is recognised for her ability to unite people—often across diverse or competing interests—to design pragmatic, culturally grounded solutions that honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and uphold the wellbeing of both the environment and the community.

Grounded in deep whakapapa ties to the region, Gina holds an unwavering commitment to kaitiakitanga. She moves confidently between whānau, iwi, government agencies, research institutions, industry stakeholders, and the wider public, consistently ensuring tikanga Māori is embedded in decision-making and that cultural, environmental, and economic values are thoughtfully integrated.



Gina brings extensive governance experience. She has served on a wide range of boards, committees, and conservation groups, including Te Korowai o Te Tai o Marokura/Kaikōura Coastal Kaitiaki, the Kaikōura Marine Guardians, the Kaikōura Mātaitai/Tāiapure Committee (as a Manager), the Ocean Ridge Catchment Conservation Group, the Kaikōura Historical Society, and the Kāhui Group to the NZ Flora Seed Bank.

Her previous leadership roles include significant appointments with the Nature Heritage Fund, the Nelson/Marlborough Conservation Board (Chair and Ngāi Tahu Representative), the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust (Director), the Molesworth Steering Committee, and the Forestry Ministerial Advisory Group, among many others. She is also a Life Member of the Titi/Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust.

Professionally, Gina has been central to advancing successful marine management outcomes for Kaikōura. Since 2008, as Secretary/Administrator for Te Korowai o Te Tai o Marokura, she helped steer the multi-stakeholder strategy that ultimately led to the Kaikōura Marine Management Act—an enduring milestone for community-led marine protection in Aotearoa.

Her strengths in governance, policy, and environmental planning are complemented by her work as a certified Independent Hearings Commissioner, contributing to complex RMA processes across the country. Gina is also highly experienced in facilitating iwi engagement and collaborative resource management workshops for national organisations.

In 2021, Gina was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit in recognition of her outstanding service to conservation and governance.

Today, she continues to contribute her experience, integrity, cultural leadership, and deep commitment to the moana through her role with the Kaikōura Marine Guardians, where she remains a steadfast advocate for kaitiakitanga, community wellbeing, and the long-term health of Te Tai o Marokura.

## Larnce Wichman



I have been involved in the fishing industry for 45 years. My role in the rock lobster industry has grown from being a processing company manager, tailing lobster for the export market, to designing and project management of the first large inland live rock lobster export system based in Ward. I am still fully engaged in the industry.

With my knowledge, I have held directorship on the New Zealand Rock Lobster Industry Council for 25 years, Executive Officer of CRAMAC 5 (Canterbury Marlborough rock lobster management group) for 26 years, and remain on the CRAMAC 5 executive Committee. Over this time, I

have assisted in improving fisheries management by enhancing data collection to better manage the rock lobster resource. I stand by the saying “you cannot manage what you do not know.” This is a fact.

I am an inaugural member of Te Korowai o Te Tai o Marokura, a Kaikōura Marine Guardian appointed as Oceans and Fisheries, Tāiapure committee member, and Director of Fish Mainland, which is a South Island recreational fishing advocacy group, and a Trustee in The Marlborough Sounds Integrated Management Trust. I have learnt that if you have something to offer and want to make a difference, you need to engage with like-minded people who also want to make a difference and share what you are passionate about. The marine environment is my passion, with the understanding of “utilising the environment within environmental limits”.

In 2024, I was awarded the Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for my contributions to the seafood industry and the Marine Environment.

I am still happily married to my wife of 46 years, have two children who have blessed us with seven grandchildren. We all hold a passion for the marine environment.

## Ma-rea Clayton

Nei ra te mihi kia koutou katoa.  
Ko Tapuae o Uenuku te Maunga.  
Ko Waiautoa te Awa.  
Ko Ngāi Tahu, Ko Taranaki, Ko Ngati Porou ngā Iwi Katoa.  
Ko Ngāti Huirapa toku Hapu.  
Ko Kaikōura Te Kaingātuturu;  
Ko Horomona Pohio toku Tipuna.  
Ko Jack Rickus toku Poua;  
Ko Wikitoria Nopera toku Taua;  
Ko Maui Tikitiki Otaraka Rickus rawa Ko Katherine Unahi oku Matua.  
E toru ngā Tamariki.  
Ko Manaia Ramana Mahuri-Hemi Clayton raua Tanimairanginui Bennett-Davis aku Mokokuna.  
Ko Peter Clayton taku Tane.  
Ko Ma-rea Clayton ahau.



Ma-rea Clayton (Ngāi Tahu, Taranaki, Ngāti Porou) is a Māori leader grounded in my whakapapa, tikanga, and the teachings of my tipuna. It carries deep ancestral ties to Kaikōura and holds a holistic, whānau-centred worldview that recognises the interconnection between people, whenua, moana, hapū, and wairua. These values shape both my leadership and the way I walk through the world.

A pivotal moment in my journey came when my immediate whānau needed support, prompting my move to the Selwyn District. Guided by aroha and māhaki, I made this transition that true rangatiratanga begins at home. Although I live in Selwyn during the week, I continue to go home to Kaikōura at the weekends, which remain central to my identity, and I carry my hapū and whakapapa with me into every space I enter.

In Selwyn, I serve as Kaitohu Matua (Senior Māori Advisor) for the Selwyn District Council. My leadership style is gentle, relational, and grounded in manaakitanga and deep listening. Known for my calm presence, humility, and clarity in challenging spaces, I bring people together with respect and ensure Māori voices are heard, understood, and valued.

I also serve as a Crown-appointed member of the Kaikōura Marine Guardians, appointed through Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura Inc and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. In this role, I weave mātauranga Māori, hapū knowledge, and environmental science to support the holistic care of Te Tai Marokura. I approach this responsibility with gratitude, acknowledging the privilege of protecting the marine taonga that has sustained my whānau and hapū for generations.

My leadership extends across environmental governance, community support, Rūnanga life, and cultural development. Whether working with whānau, hapū, councils, or community groups, I lead with integrity, humility, and a commitment to collective wellbeing. My strength lies in uplifting others, honouring diverse voices, and guiding kaupapa that support long-term flourishing.

With qualifications in Environmental Science and Management, and a lifelong passion for kapa haka, whānau, and community wellbeing, I will continue to serve with heart, patience, and dedication.

“Ko tōna ngākau he ngākau māhaki, he ngākau aroha, he ngākau manaaki.” “Her heart is humble, caring, and guided by the desire to uplift others.”

Noa reira Tena koutou, Tena koutou katoa.

## Mark Connor



Mark has been involved in representing Recreational Fishers for over 20 years and has been fishing the Kaikōura area for over 45 years and knows the importance of having a healthy sustainable fishery for all users. With a building population and more people gathering food for the table Mark can see the need to the need to make sure the fishery is managed to continue to provide food and recreational experiences for our current and future generations. He was a member of MPI regional forums back in the day and has been involved with the National Blue Cod Strategy group. He continues to represent Recreational fishers in BCO3, BCO5, BCO7 and Snapper 7 working groups. Mark has been the South Island representative for the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council for 20 years and has also been the NZSFC President and is currently co-Chair of the Fisheries Management Standing committee, he is still on the NZSFC Board and is also a life member. He is also a Director of LegaSea. He has a practical background being involved with Deer and cattle farming and 35 years in the engineering industry the last 20 of which he ran his own engineering business. He is now currently semi-retired but still involved in engineering work, cattle farming and representing the Recreational sector.

## Dr Shawn Gerrity



Guardian since 2024 – Minister of Conservation representative

Shawn is a marine ecologist specialising in coastal ecosystems, with an interest in using science to mitigate human impacts on the environment. Originally from Oregon, he developed a strong connection to the Kaikōura Marine Area while researching post-earthquake ecological change in 2016. His PhD examined pāua recovery, restoration, and the effects of recreational fishing. Shawn is a post-doctoral fellow with the Marine Ecology Research Group at the University of Canterbury and provides research for the Department of Conservation, the Pāua Industry Council, and others. A lifelong spearfisherman and hunter-gatherer, he brings scientific expertise, a commitment to sustainability, and respect for all stakeholders to support a healthy, productive coast for future generations.

## Peter Sutton

Peter is Kaikōura born with a five-generation connection to the rohe dating back to the 1860s. Peter has had a career in education as a secondary teacher of biology, science and sustainability, half of it as Head of Faculty, Science, most recently at Marlborough Boys' College. He continues this connection with the education sector through a part-time position as Laboratory Manager at Kaikōura High School. Since retiring back to Kaikōura he has devoted himself to supporting the kaitiakitanga of the rohe as a member and/or trustee of Te Korowai o Te Tai o Marokua, Kaikōura Dark Sky Trust, Kaikōura, Community Vehicle Trust, Omaka Observatory Trust and as President of Coastguard Kaikōura.



The success of the Kaikōura Marine Guardians, and the other organisations he is involved with, is enhanced by community engagement. To help achieve this Peter brings a focus on education, community engagement and connections between community interests with common objectives.

## Tā Mark Solomon



I've always felt a strong connection to the natural world. Growing up I was taught that we're part of the environment, not separate from it and that looking after the land and sea is simply part of our responsibility to those who come after us.

Over the years, I've been fortunate to be involved in a range of kaupapa focused on protecting and restoring our environment. My work has included supporting community led initiatives, contributing to environmental decision-making and helping strengthen the relationship between people and the ecosystems that sustain us. At the heart of it all is kaitiakitanga, caring for whenua, wai and moana in a way that honours both our ancestors and our future generations.

A big part of my local involvement is with Te Korowai o Te Tai o Marokura Kura in Kaikōura. Through this kaupapa I work alongside mana whenua and the community partners to help guide the protection and wellbeing of our coastal and marine environments. It's about bringing together cultural values, local knowledge and practical action to care for this special place.

At a national level, I've also served on the Board of the Deep South National Science Challenge, where the focus is on climate research and understanding the impacts of change on our people and environments. I've also been involved with the Sustainable Sea's National Science Challenge, supporting work that aims to improve the health and resilience of Aotearoa's marine ecosystems. In both roles, I've been a strong advocate for ensuring matauranga Maori sits alongside scientific research in shaping how we respond to environmental challenges.

For me, this work has always been about balance-protecting our environment while supporting the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of our communities. I believe the best solutions come when we work together, share knowledge and keep our focus on the long-term health of our natural world

## Ted Howard

Ted met his wife Ailsa in Kaikōura in 1991, was married here in 1994, and has been a local resident since 1998. Ted’s passion for nature, for hunting, for fishing, for conservation, is life-long. Ted has been involved in recreational and commercial fishing, and in fisheries science and management, for over 50 years.



Ted was president of the Kaikōura Boating Club from 2005 until 2020 then resigned from the committee but remains a life member of the club, he chaired the Kaikōura Zone Water Management Committee from 2013 until it ended in 2025, and has chaired the Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust since 2016, is caretaker of the artificial colony “Te Rae o Atiu” and is a co-author of 5 published papers in ornithology. He is a member of the Lions Club, Forest and Bird, golf club, tramping club, and has run a software and consulting company since 1986.

He remains active in several international communities on the future of humanity, existential risk, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence and global economic reform.

Ted has a practical background in farming, fishing, engineering, conservation, legislation, justice, and politics, as well as more theoretical interests in the nature of existence, our understandings of it, our roles within it, and the possibilities available in our future. The fact that Ted has tetrachromatic vision and ultrasonic hearing bands means that he has had a lifetime of experiencing things differently to most, and needing to work with those differences to get things done.

Ted is committed to empowering individuals to responsibly explore their creative potential through being active participants in healthy and diverse social and ecological systems.

## Thomas Kahu



Thomas Kahu (Ngāti Kuri, Tūrangitukua; Ngāi Tahu, Tūwharetoa) is C.E.O and Executive Chairman of Whale Watch Kaikōura and the Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura representative on the Kaikōura Marine Guardians. Thomas has worked in the Kaikōura marine tourism sector for more than three decades, beginning with Whale Watch Kaikōura in 1987 as a tour host and progressing through operational, governance, and executive leadership roles.

His long connection to the Kaikōura coast has provided deep practical knowledge of the marine environment and a strong commitment to kaitiakitanga. Thomas brings extensive experience in marine tourism, iwi governance, and environmental stewardship to his work supporting the protection and sustainable management of the Kaikōura marine ecosystem. Through his work, he continues a generational commitment to safeguarding the whales and moana of Kaikōura for future generations.

# Review of the Kaikōura (Te Tai o Marokura) Marine Management Act

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The review of the Kaikōura (Te Tai o Marokura) Marine Management Act 2014 has been a big focus for the Guardians over the last year and numerous online meetings have been held between our formal meetings to discuss the review and provide input.

The Act requires a review 10 years after it came into effect to assess the ‘operation and effectiveness’ of management measures contained in the Act. One of the measures was the establishment of the Guardians as an advisory committee to provide independent advice to Ministers. The other measures are:

- The Hikurangi Marine Reserve
- Te Rohe o Te Whānau Puha Whale Sanctuary
- The Ōhau New Zealand Fur Seal Sanctuary
- The Mangamaunu Mātaitai, Oaro Mātaitai and Te Waha o te Marangai Mātaitai, and
- Te Taumanu o Te Waka a Māui Taiāpure and Oaro-Haumuri Taiāpure.

Input from the Guardians was sought on the Terms of Reference for the review which can be found online at: [Terms of reference for the review \(PDF, 335K\)](#).

On direction of Ministers, DOC and Fisheries New Zealand are now carrying out the review, which includes public consultation and involvement of the Kaikōura Marine Guardians and local tangata whenua, Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura.

DOC and Fisheries New Zealand hired an external consultant (Allen & Clarke) to evaluate the Guardians. The consultant’s findings and recommendations will be considered as part of developing advice and recommendations to Ministers. The report

on the Guardians by Allen & Clarke can be found here: [Evaluation of Kaikōura Marine Guardians \(PDF, 577K\)](#).

Public consultation on the review closed on 11 November 2025. Submissions will inform a report for the Minister of Conservation and the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries. DOC and Fisheries New Zealand will publish this report on their websites at the conclusion of the process.



*Image credit: Clint Trahan*

# Fisheries management and sustainability

The Guardians continued to play a pivotal role in advising on fisheries management. For the Kaikōura recreational pāua fishery, the Guardians supported a cautious approach by endorsing a winter season from 1 May to 31 August. This decision balances community access with sustainability, given limited monitoring data.

The Guardians requested Fisheries New Zealand prepare a scoping paper on improved monitoring and management models for pāua. Concerns about kōura (crayfish) stocks were raised, prompting discussions on potential sub-QMA management and voluntary agreements with recreational fishers. Broader sustainability updates included kina quota increases, blue cod and skate reviews, and proposals to reduce rock lobster bag limits. These actions reflect the Guardians' proactive stance on safeguarding marine resources.

In relation to concerns about rock lobster stocks, the Guardians highlighted the need for collective action and precautionary management. The Guardians explored opportunities to contribute to CRAMAC 5 discussions and raise broader community awareness of sustainability challenges.

These efforts reflect the Guardians' role as a trusted voice for marine conservation in Kaikōura.

The Kaikōura Marine Guardians have played an active role in supporting the rollout of Fisheries New Zealand's (FNZ) Amateur Charter Vessel (ACV) electronic reporting system, which went live in December 2024. Their involvement builds on earlier work in 2018, when the Kaikōura and Fiordland Marine Guardians partnered with FNZ to host a series of ACV operator workshops exploring a voluntary trial of electronic reporting. Although funding constraints meant the trial could not proceed at that time, the Guardians continued to advocate for improved data collection and supported FNZ in the ongoing development of electronic reporting for ACVs.

This sustained collaboration has contributed to the successful nationwide adoption of electronic ACV reporting. Looking ahead, the Guardians see opportunities to further enhance the system, including expanding the range of species reported and exploring the inclusion of non-fish and protected species bycatch reporting within the ACV app.



*Image credit: Clint Trahan*

# Kaikōura Crayfish Fishery

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The Guardians' have facilitated discussions within and between commercial and amateur charter vessels, customary and recreational fishers to look at proactive management practices to ensure the health of the fishery to ensure fishing for abundance.

From these discussions it was determined that a wider community consultation was required and a community wide online survey was undertaken. The aim of the survey was to understand how people are fishing, where they are fishing, what they are experiencing in the fishery and ways in which they see the fishery being managed in the future.

455 people responded to the survey either partially or in its entirety. Survey responses have been analysed and a report prepared for the Guardians. The Guardians strongly support mandatory recreational fishing reporting as a future solution, given voluntary reporting is unreliable. Given the complexities associated with implementing this, the Guardians supported introducing rest periods for the fishery alongside other measures such as bag limit reductions and improved monitoring tools.



*Image credit: Clint Trahan*

# Marine mammal and seabird protection

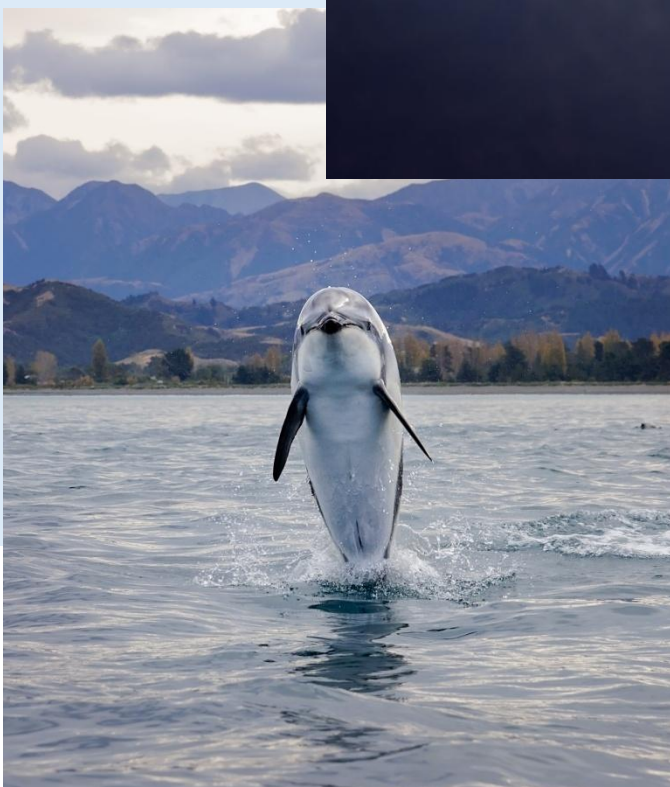
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Protecting marine mammals and seabirds remained a priority.

Guardians' members provided input into the marine mammal moratoria on new commercial operations to view marine mammals in Kaikōura (Dusky Dolphins, New Zealand Fur Seals and Sperm Whales). The three moratoria are in place until 2 August 2031. The Fur Seal moratorium includes no new permits for swimming with seals.

The Guardians reviewed the operation of the dolphin bycatch reduction plan and considered new scientific findings on the effectiveness of pingers and acoustic deterrents.

For seabirds, attention focused on Hutton's shearwaters, with discussions on the impact of set-net bans and vessel lighting practices. Guardians reinforced reporting requirements under the Wildlife Act and promoted tools for recreational fishers to report interactions with protected species. These measures underscore the Guardians' commitment to reducing human impacts on vulnerable marine wildlife.



*Image credit: Clint Trahan*

# Community engagement

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Strengthening relationships with local groups was a recurring theme throughout meetings. The Guardians acknowledged public confusion about overlapping roles with Te Korowai o Te Tai o Marokura and committed to clearer communication about the roles of both organisations. Plans were made to hold future meetings at Takahanga Marae and with the boating club and Te Korowai o Te Tai o Marokura alongside developing a one-page explainer outlining the Guardians' role.

Representatives from the Kaikōura Boating and Recreational Fishing Club and Amateur Charter Vessel sector were invited to talk to the Guardians at the August 2025 meeting to convey their perspectives on concerns around lower rock lobster catch rates around Kaikōura.



*Image credit: Clint Trahan*