



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Gumboots kick off sustainability initiatives at NZ's only commercial Paua farm**

Looking around the OceaNZ Blue paua farm at Bream Bay, Northland, one thing Lynette Suvalko saw was lots of gumboots. She also noticed a few pairs of them in the farm's rubbish skip when she and a colleague did a voluntary spot waste audit.

It was a lightbulb moment for scientist Lynette, who thought there must be a way to recycle the steel toe-capped Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) that is compulsory for all 35 employees on site, as well as any visitors.

Now OceaNZ Blue has almost a pallet of gumboots ready to go to Matta Products to have the steel toe cap removed, be chipped into 3-4mm pieces, mixed with other PCV and additives and then heated and moulded into safety mats.

"These gumboots are something we're always going to use, and we probably go through thousands of pairs a year across all the Aotearoa Fisheries Ltd divisions. All we have to do is make sure they don't go in the general waste, and check they're not too dirty and remove the inner soles before they go to Matta," says Lynette.

Lynette is a member of parent company Aotearoa Fisheries Ltd's Sustainability Working Group, which meets every two or three months to come up with initiatives that further its sustainability journey across the business. It is a space the Lynette is professionally and personally engaged in.

"It's been really inspiring to be part of the group. Our OceaNZ Blue team have been so supportive of changes we've made in terms of dealing with waste, because they see that it's not just that we're sustainable in how we farm but how we operate too," she says.

Spurred on by improvements as a result of waste audits by Global Action Plan Oceania at Aotearoa Fisheries Limited's Bell Avenue and Wellington processing plants, Lynette and a colleague undertook their own waste audit at OceaNZ Blue and discovered that of close to 90kg of material in its general waste bin for one week, more than 40 per cent were types of plastic.

In addition to the gumboots, plastic film, recyclable plastic bags and processing waste – which are largely recyclable – were what made up the bulk of what was in the bin that week. With new processes in place and an awareness programme for staff, the quantity of general waste has dropped dramatically and paper and plastic recyclables bins have been filling up.

"We've only been doing this for a couple of months, so we don't have any stats as such, but there has definitely been a drop in the number of pick-ups for general waste, as we're now consistently recycling three types of plastic," says Lynette.



OceaNZ Blue is also working towards its Aquaculture Stewardship Council certification to meet the toughest global standards for responsible aquaculture. It aims to go through the auditing process later next year.

In the meantime it is documenting existing processes that already meet the best environmental and social aquaculture standards, and putting in place others to ensure it is meeting best practice in this area and gains certification.

Already OceaNZ Blue's farmed paua is 100 per cent sustainable in that it spawns paua, preserving wild brood stock for its equally sustainable wild paua operation. The majority of OceaNZ Blue's production is also through a circulation system and it is self-sustaining in terms of how the paua are cleaned.

In addition, OceaNZ Blue paua is traceable as a result of a genetics programme that can tell which trays they've been in from when they are spawned to growing them into spats and edible paua. It's not only a key part of a sustainable operation, it's increasingly important in international markets.

Aotearoa Fisheries Chief Executive Carl Carrington is delighted with the OceaNZ Blue waste minimisation initiative.

"Our business is built on natural resources and people, and sustainability is at the heart of what we do both out in the environment and in our own operations. Our values of whakatipuranga and kaitiakitanga – of being true to nature and to future generations – are the essence of our efforts in this area," he says.

"OceaNZ Blue's waste minimisation effort to help protect our environment for future generations fits perfectly with our sustainability strategy. For us it's crucial that we ensure all stakeholders are aware that we are acting as true kaitiaki, or guardians, in every aspect of what we do."

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**Caption:** Lynette Suvalko with the nearly full pallet of gumboots at OceaNZ Blue that will be recycled and made into safety mats.

#### **About Aotearoa Fisheries Limited**

Aotearoa Fisheries is the largest Iwi-owned fisheries company in Aotearoa / New Zealand. Our vision is to be the key investment vehicle of choice for Iwi in the fishing industry, to maximise the value of Maori fisheries assets and to ensure that we are a strong seafood business delivering growth in shareholder wealth to Iwi. Aotearoa Fisheries business comprises of AFL Inshore (trading as Moana Pacific Fisheries and OPC Fish and Lobster), AFL Aquaculture (Pacific Marine Farms and Kia Ora Seafoods) and Prepared Foods Limited. In addition, Aotearoa Fisheries owns 50% of Sealord Group Limited.