



# Strategic Plan 2021-26



**Committed to  
Healthy Oceans  
Sustainable Fisheries**

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## **Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini**

Our success is not from the work of one, but from the work of many



# ORGANISATION SUMMARY

The Deepwater Group Ltd (DWG) is a not-for-profit structured alliance of the owners of quota in New Zealand's deepwater fisheries. Our role is to provide a professional capacity to unite quota owners, to assist them to maintain sustainable harvest levels from New Zealand's deepwater fisheries, to manage any environmental effects of these fishing activities, and to facilitate further economic and social prosperity of our seafood sector. DWG has strong working relationships with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ), the Department of Conservation (DOC) and others to optimise the sustainable harvests from New Zealand's deepwater fisheries resources.

DWG was established in 2005 by quota owners in recognition of the need for innovative, unified, professional and proactive approaches that underpin their businesses with effective and sustainable fisheries management practices and responsible marine environmental management. These approaches recognise the global and domestic challenges the seafood industry faces.

Oceans have recently become a new focus for environmental concern, increasing the public's interest in human activities that might affect their health. Of all the world's environments, the oceans remain one of the least understood. Better understanding of the ecology of our oceans is scientifically and technologically challenging, given their ecological diversity and their ever-changing oceanography and biodiversity. No-one is more aware of this than the Seafood Industry, who are at sea every day of the year, sustainably harvesting food from our oceans.

In New Zealand, nobody has more to lose from low stock sizes or from any deterioration in the health of New Zealand's aquatic environment than those who rely on an ongoing commercial harvest. As a consequence, quota owners are actively engaged in the science and management systems that underpin the sustainable management of New Zealand's deepwater fisheries and the oceanic environment that supports them to ensure there is a secure future for the next generations.

DWG represents the interests of shareholders who collectively own over 90% of the quota for the following species: black cardinal fish, English mackerel, frostoffish, hake, hoki, jack mackerel, ling, orange roughy, oreo, scampi, silver warehou, southern blue whiting, sea perch, squid and white warehou. Any owner of quota for deepwater species may become a shareholder of DWG. Each shareholder owns one share and is invited to contribute on a pro-rata basis to the decisions on and to the costs for approved projects relating to the fish stocks for which they own quota.

## The Deepwater Group Strategic Framework

DWG operates within a five-year strategic framework, each period having a different strategic focus:

- **2006-11: "Improve Management of and Performance within New Zealand's Deepwater Fisheries"** under the theme "Performance before PR". This was achieved through a number of successful initiatives.
- **2011-16: "Maintaining Integrity and Telling Our Story"** in order to gain recognition for excellence in fisheries management. During this period, we increased the performance of key fisheries to a level that enables some 60% of our annual production to become certified as sustainable under the Marine Stewardship Council's programme.
- **2016-21: "Re-define, Re-position, Re-engage to Re-build trust"**, while continuing to add value to New Zealand's deepwater fisheries, excel in sustainable fisheries management, support, and enhance environmental and social responsibility and engage in effective and relevant relationships.
- **2021-26: "Go far and go together"**, based upon the solid foundations that DWG has built over the past 15 years. Our strategic focus will draw upon DWG's proven capabilities, improving our capacity to deliver robust independent science while enhancing how we engage with our community and how our community engages with us.

The policy environment within which fisheries management functions are being undertaken is increasingly moving away from being based on science and real-world knowledge. DWG will continue to work proactively and collaboratively to ensure that New Zealand's fisheries resources and the methods used to harvest these are based on the best available science and on proven practices.

# WHERE ARE WE GOING?

## Our vision:

***To be trusted as the best managed deepwater fisheries in the world.***

When people buy seafood, we want them to think of New Zealand with confidence, knowing that our seafood is a proven, natural and sustainable food choice.

## Our mission:

***To ensure New Zealand's deepwater fisheries resources are managed to optimise their long-term sustainable yields.***

Upon achieving this, our vision will be realised

## Our motto:

***Committed to Healthy Oceans, Sustainable Fisheries***

To provide for sustainable fisheries we must first ensure that our oceans remain healthy.

## Whakataukī:

***Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini***

Our success is not from the work of one, but from the work of many

## Our values and beliefs:

- The food that we depend upon and the environment from which this is harvested requires our utmost care and respect
- The best foods are natural, sustainable, and responsibly produced
- We support our local communities and our workforce
- We are committed to effective knowledge-based fisheries management, innovation and excellence
- We will lead the way with inclusivity and collaboration
- We demonstrate integrity, accountability, and transparency in all that we do.

## Delivery

To realise our vision and mission, we undertake to:

- Reinforce our commitment to the Management Objectives of the Deepwater and Middle-depth Fisheries Plan
- Identify, reinvigorate, and reinforce relationships with government, iwi, and other key participants - be inclusive and invest in them
- Reinforce our commitment to independent fit-for-purpose science, scientific monitoring, and data analytics to inform decision making, communications and fisheries management
- Leverage our vision to transform how we engage with our broader community and how they engage with us
- Demonstrate and verify our performance against the world's best practice standards and continue to excel in that arena.
- Further enhance our reputation within New Zealand and around the world as sustainable seafood producers
- Manage DWG effectively, realise our mission, and efficiently deliver the desired outcomes.

# THE 2021-26 STRATEGIC PLAN

Our journey over the first 15 years has been transformational. It has now become more apparent that we have to bring others with us, lest they be left behind, or worse they go somewhere where we don't want to go.

The social and political environment surrounding fisheries is changing. Increasingly, policymakers are becoming more attentive to political pressure groups and less focussed on science, knowledge or on the worldwide need for food security. Increasingly the public is being provided misinformation on the state of our oceans and fisheries. Recognition of the need for food production must also include recognition that its production is environmentally sustainable. Seafood produced from our deepwater fisheries, in the context of all food production, remains amongst the most environmentally sustainable. Our challenge is to not only demonstrate this but also to ensure that what we are doing to manage our fisheries in New Zealand is understood and supported by the broader New Zealand community as well as it is in our international markets.

We continue to support independent monitoring and assessments of our performance that demonstrate to the community our relevance as responsible producers of high quality, safe and natural foods. We will continue to work with government to further enhance these independent validations of our performance as and where appropriate.

To achieve the above, in terms of the 3 Ps (Product, Process and People), this strategic plan will elevate and emphasise people, by:

- **Reliance upon our virtual organisation.** DWG will continue to take advantage of the significant skills and resources within our member businesses, actively working together to maximise our shared outcomes and minimise repetition and wastage. We will help one another to help one another.
- **Investing in our community and allowing them to invest in us.** As a member of our local, regional, national, and global communities, we need to adapt to the needs of these communities. To proactively engage with our community, we need to remember that our community may wish to engage with us too. We are open to this and will be flexible enough to effectuate these engagements as needed. With sound planning and execution, we can provide engagement opportunities on a number of levels and use these opportunities to convey our story to our community.
- **Actively seeking relationships and partnerships.** Only by going together with our partners will we be able to go any real distance. Levels of trust in large corporations and primary sector businesses are declining, especially as other conflicting interest groups have community engagement as their core business. To reinvigorate this trust and to overcome challenges posed by conflicting interest groups, we will develop critical mass through the creation of relationships and partnerships with those that share a common vision and work towards the achievement of common goals and interests. For existing relationships that are waning, we need to reinvigorate them. For relationships that are underdeveloped, we need to develop them. For relationships that could be partnerships, we need to partner with them.

## STRATEGIC AREAS

To provide for the realisation of our vision and mission, we have defined the following five strategic areas and identified measures of success to track how we are progressing against our goals and objectives:

1. Sustainable Fisheries
2. Healthy Oceans
3. Science, Scientific Monitoring and Data Analytics
4. People, Relationships and Communications
5. Organisational Management

# HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

## 1. SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

### Context:

Annually, New Zealand's seafood production contributes some \$3.3b to our economy. Deepwater fisheries provide \$1.8b of this. This significant contribution relies upon a broad collaborative framework – most notably our positive long-term partnership with MPI and their fisheries science, monitoring and management divisions within FNZ. This collaborative framework has resulted in the development and implementation of a comprehensive set of objectives posited to achieve healthy deepwater fish stocks, predicated on science-based information to support sustainable decision making.

This science-based information requires significant investment and expertise. The outcomes, in addition to meeting national science standards, which ensure they are objective and reliable, must also be fit for purpose and responsive to sustainable management needs. Within this collaborative framework, it is important that DWG ensures that the outcomes from investment in the sustainable management of deepwater fisheries, not only adhere to these principles but are also readily and successfully incorporated into management outcomes.

### To enable deepwater fisheries to be managed sustainably, in conjunction with FNZ, DWG will:

- Continue collaboration with MPI on joint work programmes, fisheries science, and management measures in furtherance of the Deepwater and Middle-depth Fisheries Plan and actively share the challenges and successes through our public interfaces
- Actively engage with MPI and other Ministries to assist in the formulation of sustainable fisheries reform policy programmes that reflect the needs and requirements of New Zealand's deepwater fisheries
- Continue to strengthen and enhance the science and management processes for deepwater fisheries
- Maintain and strengthen decision making relating to the sustainable management of deepwater fisheries
- Undertake risk assessments and develop effective strategies and work plans to establish the sustainable performance of deepwater fisheries
- Continue to contract and partner with science service providers to develop and apply innovative science-based fisheries assessment and monitoring approaches
- Actively participate in key fishery policy developments to ensure these are optimised to provide for both conservation and sustainable utilisation outcomes from New Zealand's deepwater fisheries resources
- Maintain and enhance DWG's operational procedures and catch limit agreements
- Maintain and enhance open and transparent fisheries management processes

### Measures of success:

- Effective, focussed, and affordable scientific work programmes, that provide results to inform management
- Sharing of agreed work plans between MPI and DWG, including contracting of scientific projects
- Effective communication and dialogue between MPI and industry and other key participants
- Regular monitoring, surveys and stock assessments of the main commercial species that ensure management measures are informed by the best available science
- Target and main bycatch fish stocks are maintained at sustainable levels
- Utilisation of catches is optimised
- Management decisions are responsive to new robust information.



## 2. HEALTHY OCEANS

### Context:

Recent reforms by Government towards an Oceans and Fisheries hub and their proposals to integrate oceans-based governance within legislative and fisheries management frameworks are welcomed in principal by DWG. DWG has long been committed to healthy oceans, which form the foundation of sustainable utilisation. Our focus on the contemporaneous delivery of both of these outcomes remains.

DWG understands intrinsically that our sustainably managed deepwater fisheries will continue to contribute to the growth and wellbeing of New Zealand. DWG now accepts the role to communicate this to the broader community, through demonstrating our verified performance against international norms and benchmarks, especially in the areas of environmental effects on habitat structure and function, on biodiversity and on ecosystem health.

### 2.1 To maintain healthy oceans and marine ecosystems, DWG will:

- Expand our role as ocean environmental stewards to meet the needs of the community, actively conveying our record of stewardship of oceans and marine ecosystems
- Maintain our risk-based approach to identify any environmental effects we might be having and to identify and implement effective strategies to avoid, remedy, or mitigate such interactions, particularly those with the benthic environment or with protected species to reduce our interactions to as low levels as possible
- Maintain close working relationships with MPI and DOC to collaboratively plan, monitor and further improve fleet and vessel performance, and to contextualise environmental interactions in deepwater fisheries
- Provide, in conjunction with MPI and DOC, systems and support to train operational managers and vessel crews on how to manage and mitigate environmental risks
- Maintain real-time communication with vessel managers and crews, foster innovation and provide support to manage incidents or knowledge gaps
- Amplify our relationships with key strategic partners and undertake joint work programs that meet our common vision and maintain open and transparent management processes.

### Measures of success:

- Increased recognition as leading ocean environmental stewards
- The Deepwater and Middle-depth Fisheries Plan reflects DWG's aquatic environmental innovations, procedures, and management processes
- All participants in deepwater fisheries have a clear understanding of our environmental interactions, are actively and effectively minimising environmental effects, are reducing the risks to protected species and to the aquatic environment
- Proactive, preventative, and responsive to environmental risks and oceans issues
- Management decisions are informed by and responsive to the best available science
- Independent protected species monitoring demonstrates little to no adverse effects on these species – seabirds, marine mammals, sharks, and corals in particular
- Improved public awareness and understanding of our interactions with protected species and the marine environment in general and of the measures we have in place to minimise these.

### 3. SCIENCE, SCIENTIFIC MONITORING AND DATA ANALYTICS

#### Context:

The realisation and maintenance of our vision is predicated upon the ability to make the best available science the foundation of all fisheries and aquatic environmental management decisions. This science must be independent, objective, and fit for purpose in order to be able to stand alone and provide confidence.

Increasingly, our deepwater oceans are becoming a multi-user environment and as technologies develop this multiple use will undoubtedly increase. While this could present new challenges for oceans science, our understanding of ecosystem pressures from activities and influences other than fishing is continuously improving through robust science, scientific monitoring, and technical analytics. While our understanding of the environmental impacts and effects of fishing is improving, other pressures may also affect the productivity of the marine environment that supports our deepwater fisheries resources. These non-fishing related pressures which include oceanographic changes, emissions, pollution, and plastics, may adversely affect the health and productivity of our deepwater fisheries resources.

To deliver our vision, we need to ensure there is adequate, fit-for-purpose and cost-effective scientific information to underpin sustainable management of our fisheries resources and aquatic environment. We need this science to be comprehensive, independent, and purposively aligned with our specified management objectives and those in the Deepwater Fisheries Plan, yet adaptable and flexible enough to meet changing requirements.

Specifically, in the short to medium term, in addition to the provision of scientific and technical services, DWG will look to effectuate efficiency and improvement in the following areas:

1. Direct purchase of effective independent science and technical services
2. A pivot towards ocean environmental science (stewardship)
3. Development and implementation of advanced data analytics

#### 3.1 Independent science and scientific services

In addition to our ongoing fisheries-related science and monitoring programmes, areas of scientific interest will include:

- Improvement of science and monitoring coordination between DWG, MPI (FNZ), DOC and other relevant bodies
- Move towards improving fitness for science and monitoring with the establishment of an integrated fit-for-purpose approach to the purchase of science to support decision making for the management of deepwater fisheries
- Optimisation of the scope and deployment of FNZ's deepwater observer programme, rationalised in terms of camera effectiveness and of a comprehensive at-sea biological catch sampling programme
- Stock assessment model ground-truthing and verification to support fisheries management decision making
- Population dynamics and spatial-temporal distribution analysis of target and secondary species
- Identification, abundance, and spatial-temporal distribution analysis of associated and dependant species
- Data collection to inform advanced data analytics for fisheries management

#### 3.2 Pivot towards ocean environmental science

In addition to our ongoing aquatic environmental and protected species science and monitoring programmes, additional areas of scientific interest will include assessments of:

- The Environmental Effects of Fishing (AEEF) for Tier 1 deepwater species
- The environmental impacts of deepwater fishing in terms of energetics (fuel use and GHG emissions), plastics, acidification, water use and pollutants
- Benthic biodiversity, to identify and characterise the range of habitats in relation to deepwater fisheries

- Any adverse effects of fishing on benthic habitats
- Options to further improve the selectivity of bottom trawl gear and its operation to ensure there are no adverse effects on interactions with epi-benthic fauna, sharks, seabirds, and marine mammals.

### **3.3 Data and advanced data analytics:**

Data technology is not just changing the game, it is transforming it. We can know today (in almost real-time) which not so long ago would have taken months of analysis to know. These new technologies which include real-time electronic reporting, remote sensing, digital monitoring, and machine-learned analytics present opportunities for the deepwater sector to harness the power of data produced by us, through combination, recombination and analysis, that integrate biological, environmental and commercial requirements to improve our triple bottom line, guide decision making, support our markets, increase our self-management capacity and capability and increase the tools at our disposal for the deployment of fishing or marine environment-related information and public relations/communications. Data transformational areas could include:

- Efficiency and performance of gear in terms of selectivity, characterisation of impacts, mitigating the effects of gear impact
- Efficiency in the use of fuel, energy, and water in terms of optimising usage and reducing effects
- Fishery performance and predicative fish behaviour
- Predictive changes in marine environmental productivity and its relationship with fisheries
- Cumulative ecosystem analysis, biological variability and characterising marine and benthic biodiversity
- Support with the optimisation of data collection, data protection and data delivery strategies and services

### **Measures of success:**

- Increased recognition as leading ocean environmental stewards
- Proactive, preventative, and responsive to environmental risks
- All participants in deepwater fisheries have a clear understanding of our environmental interactions and are actively and effectively minimising all environmental impacts and reducing the risks to protected species, in particular
- Robust, fit-for-purpose and integrated science-based information to support improved understanding of oceans issues and inform management.
- Management decisions are informed by and responsive to the best available science
- Independent protected species monitoring demonstrates that low levels of impact on these species
- Improved public awareness and understanding of our interactions with protected species and the marine environment in general and of the measures we have in place to minimise these.

## 4. PEOPLE, RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

### Context:

The 2016 Nielsen Seafood Communications survey noted that six out of ten New Zealanders feel they know only a little about the seafood industry and three claim to know nothing at all – with mainstream media being the primary information source for most New Zealanders. Clearly there is an opportunity for improved, integrated, and sustained engagement with our community.

Notwithstanding the number of negative themes affecting deepwater fisheries that are wielded both nationally and internationally by environmental NGOs, by mainstream media, and within ‘social media’, we have our own story to tell about New Zealand’s deepwater fisheries. Positive feedback on our recent report, “Towards a Deeper Understanding” is testimony to the opportunity we have to inform New Zealanders about what they can rightly share pride in. The management story of our deepwater fisheries is built on significant relationships, a reputation built on performance and “can-do”, and independent scientific verification of our management performance in both fisheries and in the oceanic environment supporting these.

This plan proposes to continue just as we always have, but also to go a little further by reinvigorating our people relationships and communications:

1. To enhance and grow effective relationships and shared work programmes with government, iwi and other key partners
2. To continue to verify our performance against the world’s best practice standards
3. To further enhance our reputation within New Zealand and around the world

### 4.1 To build effective relationships and shared work programmes with government, iwi and other key partners, we will:

- Maintain and enhance constructive and effective working relationships with government, iwi and key partners (e.g., FNZ (MPI), DOC, MfE, Te Ohu Kaimoana, SNZ and other SREs etc.)
- Continue to engage with FNZ and DOC to ensure their science work programmes are efficient and relevant to strategic and tactical fisheries management needs
- Continue to deliver on the commitments we give to the government and government agencies including science, innovation, and self-management

### Measures of success:

- The government trusts and relies upon DWG to deliver robust outcomes in support of its conservation and sustainability programmes
- Science programmes deliver focussed and relevant outcomes for management needs
- Management decisions are informed by and responsive to the best available science
- DWG is partnered with and involved in shared work programmes and projects delivering outcomes that meet social, cultural and community needs.

### 4.2 To verify our performance against the world’s best practice standards, we will:

- Maintain Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification and extend this to other deepwater fisheries
- Evaluate options and implement plans to assess further fisheries against the world’s best practice standards
- Develop additional options to assure our customers of the provenance and performance of our fisheries
- Actively support, participate and take the lead in MSC and Association for Sustainable Fisheries (ASF) governance
- Publicly promote the high standards that we have set for our fisheries, how we are achieving these, and noting those that are above what is required under New Zealand law.

### **Measures of success:**

- Our main fisheries are MSC certified without conditions
- Further fisheries are progressed towards MSC or a similar standard through Fisheries Improvement Plans
- International recognition for the high standards our sustainable fisheries are achieving.

### **4.3 To enhance our reputation within New Zealand and around the world, we will:**

- Develop and implement an integrated communications and public relations strategy and plan to assist us to gain recognition for excellence in fisheries management
- Maintain and enhance the active promotion of the sustainable management of New Zealand's deepwater fisheries (including the outlining MSC story)
- Actively engage with and align our management strategies with those of our key partners, including Te Ao Māori
- Seek opportunities to build constructive relationships with groups who have an interest in the marine environment, support these like-minded groups to deliver sustainable fisheries management outcomes, understanding that their success is our success
- Respond to common misconceptions and share our perspectives about New Zealand deepwater fisheries management, oceans and marine environmental issues, and the science and policy that underpins this management
- Communicate to the community our pride in New Zealand seafood - especially deepwater seafood – for being responsibly managed, sustainably harvested and confidently accountable
- Reach out to educators and schools, implement a summer internship programme for graduates, support training programmes (including post-graduate scholarships)
- Reinvigorate the internal Deepwater Communications Forum and meet regularly to work through programmes, monitor progress and plan for the year, as well as participate and contribute to SNZ's Comms Forum
- Embrace and participate actively in our Virtual Deepwater Fisheries Organisation, celebrate its members through media events and in policy development.

### **Measures of success:**

- Improved levels of trust in New Zealand's deepwater seafood industry
- Improved public understanding and perception of New Zealand's deepwater fisheries
- International recognition for our sustainable fisheries management and marine stewardship
- Improved communication and services for our shareholders.

## 5. ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

### Context:

DWG is a small organisation with two employees and a few specialist contractors that punches well above its weight. This plan relies on the continuation of this through people-centricity, further extending our virtual organisation, continued focus on delivering robust and fit-for-purpose science, enhanced communications, and adherence to DWG's principles of transparency, inclusiveness, innovation, and excellence.

### 5.1 To manage DWG effectively and efficiently to deliver the agreed outcomes, we will:

- Rigorously pursue measurable success in the five strategic areas
- Responsibly manage the organisation's finances and keep to approved budgets
- Recruit, train and contract diligent and capable personnel
- Continue to support our board and shareholders with innovative solutions and support services.
- Maintain regular communication with our directors and shareholders
- Implement board and shareholder decisions as directed
- Review our performance to identify areas for improvement

### Measures of success:

- Forum for effective communication and dialogue amongst quota owners
- Agreement amongst shareholders to provide a unified and coordinated approach to managing our fisheries
- Contractors deliver outcomes within agreed timelines and budgets
- Cost-efficient operation of the organisation.
- Consistent provision of services for the benefit of shareholders.