

FINAL

Strategic Priorities 2025-28

Fiordland Marine Area



Foreword

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Management Act 2005, which established the Fiordland Marine Guardians as an advisory body to central and local government. The Act created a collaborative framework for protecting and sustainably managing the Fiordland Marine Area, with the Guardians coordinating efforts among management agencies in pursuit of a shared vision for this unique and remote environment.

This milestone offers a timely opportunity to reflect on the Guardians' role and the broader management approach over the past two decades.

The Act and its associated measures responded to growing pressures at the turn of the century. Since then, the Guardians and agencies have taken an adaptive management approach to evolving challenges, including marine biosecurity, fisheries sustainability, and coastal resource use.

However, visitor numbers—particularly vessel traffic—have steadily increased, placing mounting pressure on the marine environment and affecting the character of the area. As we enter 2025, several fish stocks are depleted, the invasive kelp *Undaria pinnatifida* is spreading through Dusky and Breaksea Sounds, and moorings continue to proliferate.

Over time, the Guardians' role has expanded significantly. In advocating for action, we have taken on operational responsibilities beyond our original mandate. This workload is now unsustainable and has not been matched with appropriate resourcing.

We are fortunate to work with capable and dedicated agency representatives and value the strength of these partnerships. Yet, we acknowledge the growing resource pressures these agencies face.

It is now time for a strategic reset. In partnership with the agencies, we have identified priorities to guide our work over the next three years. We believe clearly outlining these priorities will support better planning and resourcing and will help achieve the tangible outcomes needed to address the challenges facing the Fiordland Marine Area.

Thank you for your continued support of the joint-agency model. We are proud of what has been achieved through collaboration and are committed to ensuring this approach remains effective into the future.

Ngā mihi nui,



Dr Rebecca McLeod
Chairperson, Fiordland Marine Guardians

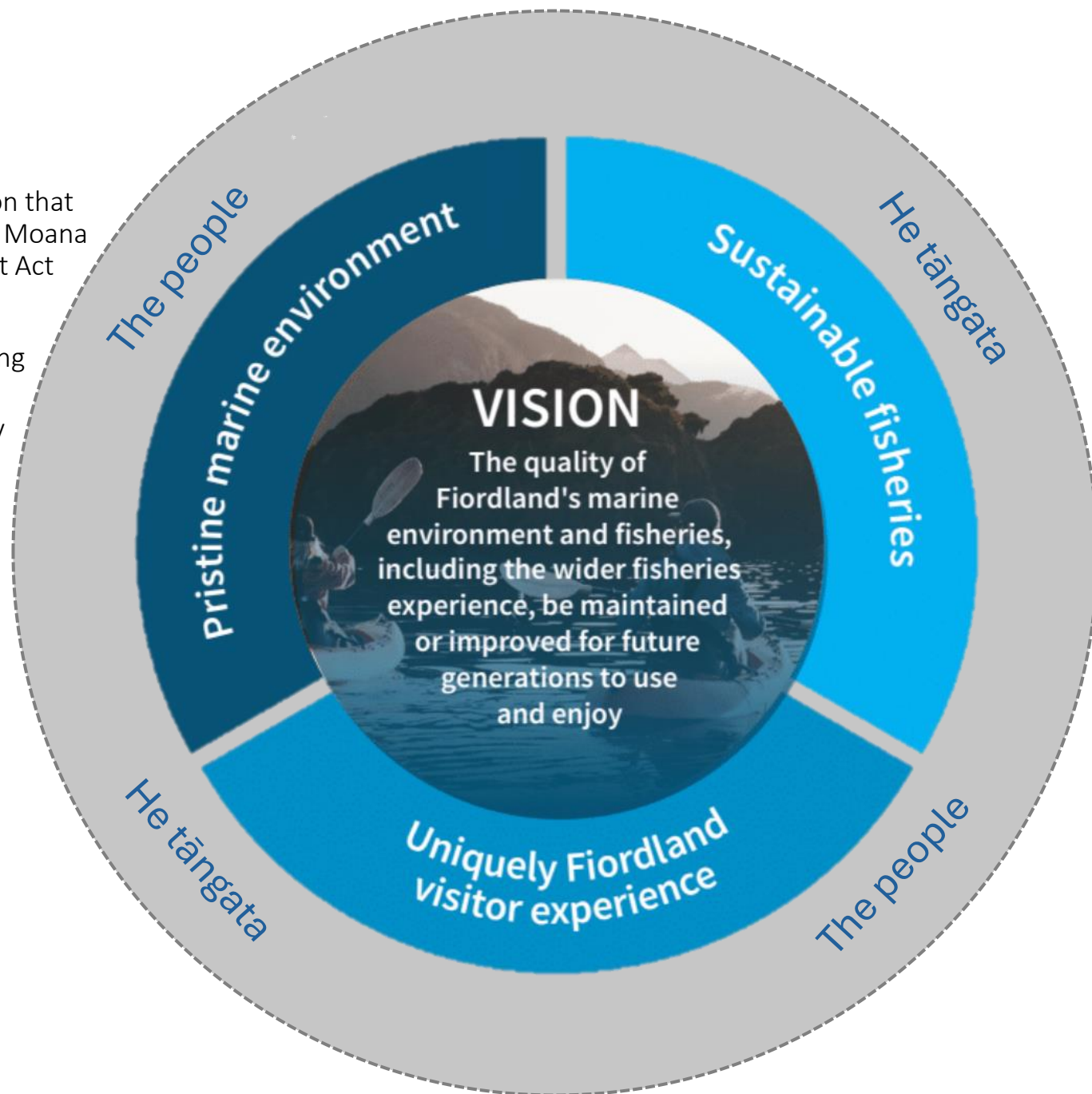
Framework

The Guardians are guided by a vision that was formalized in the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Management Act 2005.

Our focus is across three areas, being a pristine marine environment, sustainable fisheries and a uniquely Fiordland visitor experience.

He tāngata

The Guardians foster a knowledgeable, engaged community ready to express kaitiakitanga and protect this place for future generations. We promote collaboration and integrated management among government agencies that have responsibilities in the area: Department of Conservation, Ministry for the Environment, MPI-Fisheries New Zealand, MPI-Biosecurity New Zealand, and Environment Southland.



Strategic Priorities 2025-28

The Fiordland Marine Guardians (FMG) have determined a priority in each of the focal areas, as follows.

Area of Focus	Strategic priority
Uniquely Fiordland visitor experience	The amount of human activity is kept within the carrying capacity of the Fiordland Marine Area
Sustainable fisheries	Robust monitoring and reporting data enables the rebuild of key fish stocks to be measured
Pristine marine environment	No new marine invasive species are established and <i>Undaria</i> is contained within Dusky & Breaksea Sounds

The Fiordland Marine Area (FMA) is dynamic. Changing ocean conditions, particularly raised ocean temperatures, are affecting the distribution and health of species. Marine heatwaves are expected to occur more frequently and with greater intensity in the near future. There is increasing demand for access to the FMA, which presents as more vessel traffic and a growing tourism sector. Human activities can place pressure on the marine environment and ecosystems. These dynamic forces will be considered across the strategic priorities over the life of this document.

The amount of human activity is kept within the carrying capacity of the Fjordland Marine Area

Situation	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>1. There is no holistic view of the capacity of anchorages</p> <p>We do not know how many vessels the FMA could provide safe haven for in an extreme weather event</p> <p>It is difficult to access information about moorings in anchorages beyond the main ports</p>	<p>Environment Southland (ES) time and resources</p> <p>Collaboration among teams at ES</p> <p>Local knowledge and expert advice from FMG</p> <p>Local knowledge from users</p>	<p>Interactive GIS layers developed for moorings and structures</p> <p>Identify what information is held and what information gaps exist to adequately assess capacity and how that capacity is best utilised</p> <p>Determine FMA carrying capacity</p>	<p>GIS tool available to public to assist with development and assessment of consent applications</p> <p>Shape of further outputs (e.g. regional plan) subject to Resource Management reforms</p>	<p>Fair, equitable and safe allocation of space in anchorages</p>
<p>UNDER DEVELOPMENT;</p> <p>Activities & Outputs subject to Resource Management reforms</p>				
<p>2. Number of tourist vessels is held at current levels pending assessment of FMA's carrying capacity</p> <p>Broad consents can lead to pressure increasing in discrete parts of the FMA</p> <p>Demand for moorings by tourist vessels risks excluding access to moorings for other sectors</p>	<p>ES time and resources</p> <p>Collaboration among teams at ES</p> <p>Local knowledge and expert advice from FMG</p> <p>Local knowledge from users</p>	<p>ES determines FMA carrying capacity and develops settings</p> <p>Identify various regulatory options for managing capacity and progress the appropriate tools</p>	<p>Regulatory tools are implemented to provide a fair and consistent allocation of space across sectors</p>	<p>Vessel (and ancillary) activity is restricted to a level where the defined values of the FMA are maintained</p>

Robust monitoring and reporting data enables the rebuild of key fish stocks to be measured

Situation	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>1. Fisheries monitoring challenges in Fiordland limits responsive fisheries management</p> <p>Lack of spatially-appropriate and cost-effective fisheries monitoring tools via MPI Fisheries NZ</p> <p>Standard methods for estimating fishing effort and catch for independent fishers (eg. National Panel Survey) have less accuracy in Fiordland</p> <p>Reporting of fishing effort and catch aboard Amateur Charter Vessels is now ER/GPR</p>	<p>MPI Fisheries NZ time and resources.</p> <p>Scientific, analytical/policy, and fisheries compliance expertise</p> <p>Department of Conservation support for trialing baited remote underwater video (BRUV), which has potential as a fisheries monitoring tool</p> <p>Local knowledge and expert advice from FMG</p>	<p>MPI Fisheries NZ assesses the potential for data products from ER/GPR to act as monitoring proxies</p> <p>Explore trial of recreational self-reporting</p> <p>Explore development of ACV citizen science program to complement ER/GPR</p> <p>DOC and MPI Fisheries NZ to continue collaboration on investigation into the suitability of BRUV and required further development</p>	<p>Regular reporting of available catch and effort data from MPI Fisheries NZ to FMG</p> <p>Citizen science program developed and implemented to obtain information about fish size, sex, growth rate etc.</p> <p>Long-term plan developed for implementation of BRUV. Resourcing secured.</p>	<p>Robust way to monitor species trends over time and space</p> <p>Monitoring data informs review of the effectiveness of fisheries rules</p> <p>The community is engaged in the collection of data, and in the goal to rebuild the fisheries</p>
<p>2. Levels of compliance with amateur fishing rules has declined</p> <p>Rules for FMA are relatively complex</p> <p>Fishing community lacks "buy in"</p>	<p>MPI Fisheries Compliance and Compliance Subcommittee</p> <p>Communications & Engagement Sub-Committee</p>	<p>Medium-term review of effectiveness of fishing rules if appropriate, informed by new data</p> <p>Retain consistent fisheries compliance presence</p> <p>Effective communication of fishing rules</p>	<p>Fishing rules amended if appropriate</p> <p>Communications products designed for fishing audience in FMA</p> <p>Fisheries compliance activities are conducted throughout the year</p>	<p>Amateur fishing compliance increases over time</p> <p>Compliance Officers encounter less fishers confused about the rules</p>

No new marine invasive species are established and *Undaria* is contained within Dusky & Breaksea Sounds

Situation	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes/Targets
<p>1. <i>Undaria</i> (Fiordland's only marine pest) is established throughout Breaksea Sound, Acheron Passage and Dusky Sound</p> <p>Pathway management approach (keep key anchorages clear)</p>	<p><i>Undaria</i> management: Time and resources from ES, BNZ and DOC as per joint agency agreement</p> <p>Southland Regional Pest Management Plan</p>	<p><i>Undaria</i> biomass removal at key anchorages in Breaksea and Dusky Sounds as per <i>Undaria</i> management plan</p> <p>Keep abreast of new surveillance technology and marine pest treatment methods</p>	<p>Six <i>Undaria</i> control trips completed per annum at high-risk sites</p> <p>Regular meetings of Biosecurity and Comms & Engagement Subcommittees</p> <p>Fiordland represented at regional & national marine biosecurity forums</p>	<p><i>Undaria</i> is not found in FMA outside Breaksea and Dusky Sounds</p> <p>No new marine pests established in FMA</p> <p>Fiordland boat users are well informed about marine biosecurity</p>
<p>2. Fiordland Marine Biosecurity Plan is comprehensive and includes education, prevention, surveillance, compliance and response readiness</p> <p>Funded by Environment Southland (ES), MPI Biosecurity New Zealand (BNZ) & Department of Conservation (DOC)</p> <p>Owned by Biosecurity Subcommittee</p>	<p>Fiordland Marine Regional Pathway Management Plan (FMRPMP)</p> <p>Surveillance and compliance: Time and resources from ES, BNZ and DOC</p> <p>Master Collaboration Agreement between ES, DOC, BNZ</p> <p>Statement of Work for joint-agency <i>Undaria</i> management</p> <p>Statement of Work for joint-agency marine biosecurity compliance</p>	<p>Biosecurity communications & outreach</p> <p>Administration of FMRPMP</p> <p>ES hull check program in Bluff & Rakiura</p> <p>Joint agency compliance trips</p> <p>FMA-wide marine pest surveillance</p> <p>Agencies follow commitment to incursion investigations and responses</p>	<p>Regular articles on marine biosecurity using FMA channels</p> <p>Review of FMRPMP</p> <p>Clean vessel passes</p> <p>Minimum of three joint agency compliance trips per annum</p> <p>Six surveillance trips per annum, ensuring all known structures, moorings and lines are checked Fiordland-wide at least once per year</p>	<p>100% compliance with clean vessel pass requirements for moored vessels, 80% compliance for trailer boats</p> <p>New incursions are responded to quickly as per joint agency agreement</p>

Appendix

1. Purpose of this document

This document outlines the strategic priorities that the Guardians and Management Agencies have identified for the period 2025-28. The purpose is to guide the Management Agencies so that work plans can be developed and resources secured to support contributions in these priority areas. The Guardians acknowledge that each agency has legislated responsibilities in the Fiordland Marine Area in addition to those identified in this document.

2. How is work coordinated in each priority area?

Each priority area requires collaboration across departments and inter-agency collaboration, such is the nature of work in the Fiordland Marine Area. Outside of the joint Fiordland Marine Guardians – Management Agencies meetings, working groups in each Strategic Priority are as follows:

Uniquely Fiordland Visitor Experience: New cross-department working group within Environment Southland, including representatives from Planning, Resource Consents, Compliance and Harbour Master functions. The FMG will sit on this group in an advisory capacity.

Sustainable Fisheries: The FMG Monitoring Subcommittee will function as the working group. The FMG Compliance Subcommittee and the FMG Communications & Engagement Subcommittee will be looped in as required.

Pristine Marine Environment: The FMG Biosecurity Subcommittee will function as the working group. The FMG Compliance Subcommittee and the FMG Communications & Engagement Subcommittee will be looped in as required.

3. Who is responsible for advancing the Strategic Priorities?

These Strategic Priorities were identified by the Fiordland Marine Guardians and developed by representatives from the management agencies. The further development, implementation and monitoring of activities under each priority area are dependent on input and resourcing from the management agencies. The Fiordland Marine Guardians, Department of Conservation, Ministry for the Environment, MPI-Fisheries New Zealand, MPI-Biosecurity New Zealand, and Environment Southland will work together on these priority areas.

4. Implementation

Each of the situations under each priority has at least one tangible output that will require implementation. These will be developed by the working group responsible for that strategic priority.

5. Measuring progress

Progress will be measured as the amount of outputs implemented. Outcome indicators will also be assessed. Working groups will determine sources of data that can inform the delivery of outcomes, and in cases where these data sources do not exist, measures will start to be collected (e.g. quantitative records from compliance trips regarding the proportion of fishers understanding/not understanding the fishing rules). For some communications outcomes, outcomes indicators will be developed with the communications consultant as the messaging framework is developed.

5. Progress reporting

Working groups for each priority area will report progress to joint meetings between the FMG and senior management from each agency. These meetings will be held on a 6-monthly basis, independent of the regular joint FMG-agency representatives meetings. The Fiordland Marine Guardians will convene and chair the meetings, primarily online. Agency representatives are encouraged to attend.

6. Review

The Strategic Priorities will be reviewed in 2028. They may be reviewed earlier in the event that an unexpected incident in the FMA demands urgent attention and resources.