

# STOP THE GREENWASHING OF NEW ZEALAND'S FISHING INDUSTRY

## *Dear Seafood New Zealand,*

We are writing to express our deep concerns and views about Seafood New Zealand's ongoing attempts to greenwash the activities of Aotearoa's commercial fishing industry.

**Your repeated claim that New Zealand has already protected 30% of its ocean is inaccurate and misleading.**

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework — which New Zealand has signed up to — calls for 30% of the world's land, ocean and inland freshwater bodies to be placed in *ecologically representative* and *well-connected* protected areas by 2030.

Your continued assertion that New Zealand has met this target through a form of protection known as 'Benthic Protection Areas' (BPAs) is both scientifically and ethically flawed. While these areas restrict bottom trawling and dredging on the seabed, they still allow midwater trawling, longlining, and other extractive industrial practices — such as seabed mining. To describe these areas as "protected" when they remain actively fished is disingenuous.

Worse still, many of New Zealand's current BPAs were intentionally placed in areas so deep that bottom trawling is not even possible to undertake there — offering no real additional protection for marine biodiversity.

**These areas were selected — by industry — for their minimal impact on commercial fishing operations, rather than for the protection they offer to species and habitats.**

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is clear that protected areas must have long-term conservation objectives, be effectively managed, and exclude industrial exploitation. Even the Department of Conservation says these areas don't protect sufficient biodiversity to meet the protection standard. By definition, marine protected areas are supposed to be created for the long-term conservation of nature.

Portraying BPAs as meaningful protection therefore misleads the public, delays genuine marine conservation, and creates a dangerous illusion of progress — all while less than 1% of our ocean territory is actually protected, the state of many of our threatened native species and fish stocks continue to decline, and vulnerable ecosystems remain exposed to harm.

The fishing industry's social licence continues to erode and people expect "sustainable" to mean more than rhetoric. New Zealand's commercial fishing companies — many of which are making genuine and effective efforts to adapt — deserve much better from their representative body than greenwashing and spin.

We, the undersigned environmental organisations, marine scientists, and tangata whenua, urge Seafood New Zealand to stop making claims that overstate our nation's marine protection achievements, and instead support meaningful, science-led, Treaty-consistent action to restore the health of our ocean.

**Our ocean deserves more than paper parks and PR spin. It needs real protection.**

Signed,

**DR KAYLA KINGDON-BEBB**

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New Zealand

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Marine Scientist,  
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**NATALIE JESSUP**

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**JAMES GIBSON**

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