Partners Newsletter

Keeping you informed

November 2015

Styela and *Sabella* in Picton and Waikawa – What's happening?

Recent results (May 2015) has shown that despite the suppression work carried out to date, *Styela clava* is well established in Picton Marina and both Waikawa Marina and Bay. Numbers found were not signs of a rampant infestation but its building up. This demonstrates the challenges involved in species-led management of marine pests.

As previously reported, the invasive sea squirt *Styela clava* and fanworm *Sabella spallanzanii* were detected in Marlborough waters in June 2013 and November 2014 respectively. There have been a number of dive surveys in Picton, Waikawa and Shakespeare Bay. These were carried out at the time with the aim to suppress the population of *Styela*. They also sought to ensure thorough surveillance (and elimination) of *Sabella* and to generally search new areas to support the MPI Marine High Risk Site surveillance (for organisms new to New Zealand).

On a positive note, the *Sabella* detected in Picton Marina during the May 2015 dive survey (3 specimens) were all in the same location as the two detected in November 2014. No other evidence of *Sabella* was found elsewhere in Picton, Waikawa or Shakespeare Bay.

A real benefit of the work conducted in Marlborough to-date has been the collaborative decision making. As this has occurred, only steps that are measured and palatable to both the agencies, stakeholders and interested parties are taken. From the outset in June 2013, Marlborough District Council (MDC) has maintained close contact with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), Marine Farming Association, Port Marlborough, Te Ātiawa o Te Waka-a-Māui and the Department of Conservation. This collaborative approach, that has also included some agreed cost sharing, has ensured approaches are explored thoroughly and are pragmatic.

A stock-take between all the parties was held in July 2015. This produced a thorough discussion over what has occurred since June 2013 and what could be considered for the future. At the time of writing, MDC and MPI staff are looking at options for both these two species before finalising an approach amongst the collaborative group and respective agencies.

Styela clava

Specimens removed in May 2015.

Sabella spallanzanii

Pete's Pondering

Saxon Onward

On 26 June the Ministry for Primary Industries alerted the TOS Partnership that the fishing vessel Saxon Onward was under tow to Port Nelson for repairs and had suspected severe biofouling. The vessel was inspected on arrival and was confirmed to have severe biofouling on its hull and was treated accordingly. During cleaning activities, the harmful sea squirt *Pyura doppelgangera* was found on the hull along with other organisms not native to New Zealand. The *Pyura* individuals were removed by hand and other specimens sent to NIWA for identification. The vessel was repaired in Nelson and returned to Australia.

This incident showed improved use of intelligence systems within MPI, bringing together useful information to proactively identify risks at the border. Much of the impetus for these better systems came from the Voyager P incident earlier in the year where a risk vessel was identified in Nelson after it had received border clearance elsewhere. It was wrapped in plastic to manage a range of threats.

MPI describes the current system regarding biofouling at the border as follows: *If risk is suspected based on mandatory arrival information and assessment against a set risk profile, further investigation is carried out by the inspector. The vessel operator can be directed by the inspector to move the vessel and/or deal with the biofouling risk by an agreed method. The further investigation may include a dive survey by an approved provider at the vessel operator's expense. Until the Craft Risk Management Standard for Biofouling becomes mandatory in 2018, a threshold for severe biofouling is used to determine whether to take any action. MPI's National Operations Centre receives the arrival information and any other information and coordinates the risk rating and recording of the findings and actions taken. If the threshold level of fouling is met or an 'unwanted' organism identified, the decision maker (MPI regional manager) will make the call for action to be taken by the inspector in response to the risk. Once the vessel has been cleaned or treated, the vessel is given border clearance, or if treatment is refused by the vessel owner the vessel will probably be directed to leave New Zealand waters. Poorly compliant vessels have their records tagged and this is part of the information used for assessing future arrivals of the vessel to New Zealand.*

Areas for further improvement of the system have been identified and discussed with MPI and the TOS Marine Biosecurity Partnership Management Committee.

Important Notice

MPI has provided a summary of its recent results from the Nelson marine pest survey

You may have been aware that a survey for invasive marine pests was conducted for the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) by NIWA in the Port of Nelson, Mapua and Waimea Inlet recently. This was part of a national surveillance programme that searches for non-native marine organisms that could threaten our marine environment, kai moana, and the broad range of values that marine and coastal areas provide for us all.

The winter survey was conducted in Nelson during the week of 24th – 28th August 2015. **No new-to-NZ or new-to-Nelson species were detected.**

Marine pest species that have been found in the port historically were also detected during the recent survey, including the Mediterranean fanworm (*Sabella spallanzanii*), the Japanese seaweed Undaria and the clubbed tunicate (*Styela clava*) continues to be detected throughout the port and marina area, and as far out as Haulashore Island. It is likely that these pests were transported to Nelson attached to the hulls of bio-fouled (dirty-hulled) vessels and equipment.

With warmer weather approaching, more boaties will be moving around our coastline, so please remember to clean your boat and equipment before you depart - not only to protect the areas you are travelling to, but also to protect your home port.

Barrie's Bilge

Marlborough District Council and Nelson City Council are presently trying to manage two marine pests in the Top of the South; the sea squirt *Styela clava* and Mediterranean fanworm *Sabella spallanzanii*. MPI has been working jointly with the two councils on elimination programmes for *Sabella*, and up until recently was one of the funding partners to the long term management of *Styela* in Picton Marina and Waikawa Bay.

The councils and MPI have jointly contracted divers to periodically remove the pests from marine habitats and from berthed or moored boats. It is hoped that the work will completely eliminate the pests or at least slow their spread into the Marlborough Sounds and Tasman or Golden Bays, where they could have negative impacts on marine ecology and industries like aquaculture.

One of the challenges is that the regional distribution of the two pests is largely unknown. So it would help greatly if people out on the water kept a particular eye out for these two species; some photos and related information, including contact information for reporting any finds are provided below.

Mediterranean fanworm

Known distribution in Top of South: Not established, but detected and removed from Nelson marina and Picton marina.

Key features: Tube is tough and flexible and often looks muddy. Fans are white, banded with brown and orange, and central stem is orange. Looks different to NZ fanworms in that it is larger and it has a single fan.

Size: Usually up to 40 cm long but individuals up to 60 cm have been found in Auckland.

Clubbed Sea Squirt

Known distribution in Top of South: Port Nelson, Picton marina, Waikawa Bay.

Key features: Tough and knobbly, attached by short stalk. Under water two short siphons are visible on top of the organism, but these are difficult to see out of water.

Size: Up to 15-20 cm long.

If you see these pests in the Top of the South outside their known distribution, or you see other unusual or suspicious organisms:

- Note your location (GPS if possible).
- Take a photo and refrigerate a sample.
- Contact MPI Hotline as soon as possible on freephone 0800 80 99 66.

Is your bum clean this summer?

This summer every boatie we can find is going to be asked ***is your bum clean?*** *Recreational boats that are permanently in the water have been identified as the number one risk for introducing new pest organisms into the TOS marine environment. Picking up the theme used in Bay of Plenty our campaign aims to get basic information onto every vessel. Information gathering is integrated into this with a questionnaire for vessel owners. There is also a cooperative effort with the travel lift operators to get better data on a wide range of vessels. Every vessel questionnaire completed equals an entry in* ***a prize draw*** *for a free lift and clean at a port of your choice.*

Can you help?

If you can help with the distribution of campaign materials or have a newsletter that we can contribute to, contact Charmayne at tosmarinebio@gmail.co.nz

www.marinebiosecurity.co.nz

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