

1 March 2024

Bold endeavours – salmon farming in the open ocean

Nine years ago, we started the resource consent and consultation process for its Blue Endeavour open ocean salmon farm.

Today, we are celebrating achieving final Government approval to proceed with an aquaculture project that will be a New Zealand-first – and a world-first in farming the King Salmon species in the open ocean.

Carl Carrington, NZKS Chief Executive Officer describes the process to gain resource consent, Fisheries New Zealand approval and to find common ground with iwi, eNGOs, and the community as being ‘very robust.’

Carl describes the next steps, having achieved this milestone, as ‘needing to walk before we can run.’

“From here, we will complete our 18-month programme of rigorous benthic (seabed), seabird and marine mammal monitoring. This will provide a baseline of information, against which we can measure the impacts of a working salmon farm.

“The next step will be a ‘proof-of-concept’ phase, putting in the trial pens from June 2025. This is when it starts to get exciting from a farming point of view – building a smaller-scale pilot farm so that we can trial new infrastructure while monitoring the welfare of our salmon, to ensure they can thrive,” Carl says.

“Aquaculture is a business that rewards patience and caution.

“We will dip our toes into the open ocean, to carefully realise Blue Endeavour’s potential, while continuing to talk to local communities, iwi and others who also have key interests, rights and values around the ocean,” Carl says.

Blue Endeavour, when fully operational, could generate NZD \$300million in new revenue per annum. Regional economies will benefit from growth in supporting infrastructure and services required, such as boat servicing, and skilled jobs in farming, engineering, processing and more.

Carl describes New Zealanders’ support for this kind of aquaculture as being ‘incredibly important’ to NZKS.

“New Zealanders love their kaimoana, but not everyone is able to catch it for themselves and for their families. Salmon is a highly nutritious source of healthy protein and consumers are also starting to appreciate that farmed salmon has a low carbon footprint compared to many other animal protein sources.

“We have never taken the support we have for our products and what we are doing for New Zealand aquaculture for granted. This drives us to continuously improve our environmental footprint across the company, and was a motivator during the past nine years of dialogue and consultation to get the green light for Blue Endeavour.

“While we have some way to go until Blue Endeavour is fully operational, today is a day for our company to celebrate the successful completion of this chapter,” Carl says.

Grant Lovell, NZKS General Manager of Aquaculture, describes the open ocean as ‘an exciting opportunity and the next logical step for New Zealand’s aquaculture industry.’

“When we look to the open ocean we are looking at the future for salmon farming in New Zealand – in cooler, deeper waters. It is a bit of a new frontier for our aquaculture industry – but one that we are entering one step at a time, backed by science and evidence-based decision making,” Grant says.

During an extensive planning phase, NZKS undertook comprehensive assessments of the environmental effects and applied independent science from the Cawthron Institute, SLR Consulting and Robertson Environmental.

“Putting fish pens out in the open ocean is not for the faint hearted. We will be working in a dynamic environment, with waves up to 10 metres high – anyone that has caught the Cook Strait ferry knows what we are talking about.

“We will be trialling technologies and investing in mooring grid infrastructure to ensure we are able to adapt to the Cook Strait conditions” Grant says.

About Blue Endeavour

Blue Endeavour will be New Zealand’s first open ocean aquaculture farm. It will also be the world’s first farm of its type for the valuable King Salmon (Chinook) fish species.

The farm will be located 7km off Cape Lambert in the Cook strait. It will comprise two blocks of ten circular pens; the total farm will be less than 12 surface hectares in size. When fully operational, Blue Endeavour will have the capacity to produce 10,000 metric tonnes of chinook salmon.

Images, maps, key metrics, a timeline of the resource consent process and research reports are available online: <https://www.kingsalmon.co.nz/open-ocean-blue-endeavour/>

About farming the King Salmon breed

King Salmon is a niche salmon breed that has put New Zealand on the global map as a premium export product that is also enjoyed by our domestic consumers.

Representing less than 1 per cent of global salmon production, the King Salmon species usually sells for significantly more than the price of Atlantic salmon. Atlantic salmon is the predominant salmonoid species sold globally. Internationally NZKS are unable to meet demand, particularly for our premier ‘Ora King’ products which has a significant following in the United States.

Open ocean salmon aquaculture is the farming of salmon in enclosed fish pens, anchored in place to the seabed, in exposed marine environments.

NZKS has farmed salmon for more than 35 years in the Marlborough Sounds, and with nursery, hatchery and processing land-based operations in Nelson, Tākaka and Canterbury.

The further expansion of salmon farms in inshore areas is unlikely in New Zealand – open ocean aquaculture is recognised as being critical for the future sustainable growth of the salmon sector.

The Ministry of Primary Industries recently commissioned a [report on the life cycle analysis of farmed King Salmon](#). This report concludes that farmed King Salmon has a lower carbon footprint than most land proteins.

Authorised by:

Board of Directors of New Zealand King Salmon Investments Limited

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