



Judges' Report

CATEGORY:

Marine

Waikawa Boating Club – Clean & Green

INTERVIEWED

John Labou, Martin Cuthbert (Vice-Commodore), and Susie Caley (Rear Commodore-House)

DATE

6 December 2024

JUDGES

Phil Bradfield (Coordinating Judge), Eric Jorgensen, and Oliver Wade

INTRODUCTION

The Waikawa Boating Club, with over 700 members, is the largest boating club on Te Waipounamu (South Island) and represents the most significant collective of recreational boaters in the Marlborough Sounds. The club acknowledges its privilege to recreate in this remarkable area and embraces its responsibility to act as stewards of these vital waterways.

GENERAL INFORMATION

In 2023, the Waikawa Boating Club joined Yachting New Zealand's "Clean Club" programme, and within a year, they launched several environmental initiatives, earning the prestigious 3-star rating—one of only five clubs nationwide to achieve this distinction and the first on the South Island. Their initiatives included:

- Transitioning to low-energy LED lighting.
- Eliminating single-use utensils and dishes at club events.
- Establishing stringent waste sorting, disposal, and recycling protocols.



- Reducing water consumption with sprinkler timers and drought-resistant native plantings.
- Installing solar panels to reduce grid energy consumption.
- Organizing regular beach clean-ups, with members boating to various beaches in the Sounds to collect shoreline debris. These efforts involve coordination with local landowners, iwi, and the council when necessary.

In addition, the club has highlighted environmental sustainability through a "Green Corner" in their regular newsletter. This section promotes various initiatives and ideas aimed at minimizing their environmental footprint. Members actively support the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Predator Free 2050 initiative, assisting with trap setting, baiting, and checking, while also logging wildlife encounters.

Location and Stakeholders

The club operates from a clubhouse located right on the water, in front of the Waikawa Marina. Many of the environmental initiatives described above take place at this campus, with others extending throughout the extensive waterways of the Marlborough Sounds.

The Clean & Green project is spearheaded by the club's executive committee, particularly John Labou (Executive Committee—Sustainability). However, it is the diverse group of club members who are taking up the challenge of adopting more sustainable behaviours to reduce their environmental impact. Examples of this include transitioning to lower/zero-glycerin detergents and securing discounts on eco-friendly products.

History and Background

Founded in 1949, the Waikawa Boating Club has grown to become the largest collective of recreational boaters in Te Waipounamu, making it a prominent presence in the region.



Current Activities

In addition to the initiatives mentioned above, the club has hosted Port Marlborough's sustainability representative at their Annual General Meeting to update members on Clean Marinas initiatives throughout the region's marinas. This session received positive feedback and a strong turnout. The club is also seeking speakers for their Friday night dinners to discuss environmental and sustainability topics.

The club has committed to conducting all sailing events as "Clean Regattas," in alignment with Yachting New Zealand's standards. This includes the successful Women's Regatta held in September.

An essential component of the club's "Clean & Green" messaging is the regular "Green Corner" blog in the newsletter, which provides tips for safer and more environmentally aware boating practices. Topics include correct anchoring techniques, the use of eco-friendly detergents, and updates on relevant legislative changes from MPI, DOC, and other authorities. This blog has recently been incorporated into the club's website, broadening its reach.

Additionally, the club has developed several training days focused on improving boating practices in the Marlborough Sounds environment. A key example is their safe anchoring training sessions.

THE JUDGES WERE IMPRESSED BY

The judges were impressed by:

1. The passion and dedication of both the executive members and club members in embracing significant behavioural changes to reduce their environmental footprint in the Marlborough region.
2. The willingness of club members to adopt environmentally friendly practices and actively seek out cleaner, greener products for use on their boats.
3. The club's pride in earning the 3-Star Clean Club award from Yachting New Zealand.
4. The concerted effort to transition from more harmful boating products to environmentally friendly alternatives.



PROBLEMS AND HOW THEY HAVE BEEN TACKLED

For a club of 700 members, many of whom have boated in the region for 30 to 40 years, a significant challenge lies in changing on-the-water behaviours, particularly increasing environmental awareness among recreational boaters. The club's primary focus is environmental education, ensuring members and subscribers to their newsletter (approximately 500) have the knowledge needed to make informed decisions while enjoying the waterways of the Marlborough Sounds and beyond.

Effective communication has been key in making progress, particularly through the club's newsletter, which boasts an impressive open rate of 60 to 70%. A recent survey was conducted to align the club's Executive Committee with the members' priorities, with the weekly newsletter emerging as one of the most valued offerings. Additionally, the club has seen strong participation in initiatives such as beach clean-ups.

SUMMARY

The Waikawa Boating Club is deeply committed to ensuring its members understand their role in protecting the marine environment. Through effective communication and ongoing engagement, the club is fostering a greater awareness of sustainable practices and minimizing its environmental footprint. The club's efforts help ensure that members have the knowledge and skills to safely enjoy the waterways, while also preserving them for future generations.

SUGGESTIONS

As part of the club's "Clean & Green" communication strategy, the judges suggest the following actions:

- Collaborate with the Marlborough District Council (MDC) to better understand the implications of the new Marine Environment Plan, recently published by the council.
- Share information with members on how to identify and avoid disturbing nesting or roosting sites of the endangered King shag, a species native to the area.
- Work with the Mana and Pelorus boating clubs to develop a collective strategy to reduce the environmental impact of existing moorings, particularly when consents expire. This could include the installation of marine-flex (or similar) mooring systems.