

**SUSTAINABLE
SEAS**

Ko ngā moana
whakauka



**Resources for marine
and coastal ecotourism
(MCET) operators**

June 2024

Report for Sustainable Seas National Science Challenge project *Developing marine ecotourism (Project code 2.4)*

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For more information on this project, visit:

www.sustainableseaschallenge.co.nz/our-research/growing-marine-ecotourism/



About Sustainable Seas Challenge

Our vision is for Aotearoa New Zealand to have healthy marine ecosystems that provide value for all New Zealanders. We have 60+ research projects that bring together around 250 scientists, social scientists, economists, and experts in mātauranga Māori and policy from across Aotearoa New Zealand. We are one of 11 National Science Challenges, funded by Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment.

www.sustainableseaschallenge.co.nz

Cover image: Wynyard Quarter, Auckland. Credit: Michael Lück

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Overview and context

The Sustainable Seas National Science Challenge has conducted a wide range of research across various blue economy sectors. Marine and Coastal Ecotourism (MCET) in Aotearoa New Zealand has a strong presence across the country and is growing at a fast pace. With this growth comes concerns about the potential impacts these operations have on the marine environment and coastal communities, as well as questions on whether operators are fulfilling their potential contributions to communities, Māori, and the nation. Tourism must grow in a culturally, social, economic, and environmentally sustainable fashion, so that Aotearoa New Zealand's resources are not over-stretched and cultural integrity is maintained. Promoting MCET can contribute significantly to that goal.

Navigating the business environment can be challenging for MCET operators, especially for those planning to start new operations. Established operators also experience challenges in terms of staff training, regulatory changes, and administrative workloads. A range of resources are available to support operators. This document provides links to these resources, which will help MCET operators to identify support and training opportunities in Aotearoa and beyond. Many of the included organisations make courses and resources available online for easy access, often free of charge.

Sustainable Seas has also published a set of [Blue Economy Principles](#), which are designed to support businesses, regional governments and economic development agencies, and national government agencies to plot transitions towards a blue economy. Adopting the principles as guidelines for national, sectoral, and regional economic development strategies will set expectations that require a transition from business-as-usual investment, resource use, and management by all private, iwi/hapu-whānau, and public resource users and managers.

About this document

In this document, we introduce what the blue economy principles might mean for transitioning towards a blue economy (Guidelines in Tourism). We then introduce the educational and supporting resources available to develop and implement marine coastal ecotourism, with a brief commentary on how each might help firms to transition towards a blue economy.



*Pelagic birdwatching off
Stewart Island.*

Credit: Michael Lück

Blue economy principles in marine and coastal tourism

The blue economy principles were developed by researchers and partners after reviewing international best practice, resulting in a set of blue economy principles developed through a uniquely Aotearoa New Zealand lens. The principles make a blue economy imaginable, manageable, and investable. They provide entrepreneurs and communities a sense of what is possible and feasible and a way to achieve a blue economy through investment, production, and social engagement. The principles offer investors and entrepreneurs opportunities to secure market access and market advantage, while de-risking their investments from market, regulatory, or community concerns with negative social and environmental impacts. This is especially the case as tourism entities become incorporated into nature-based disclosure regimes or other forms of sustainability reporting to meet market, finance, and supply chain directives.

The blue economy principles also establish a framework for management and regulatory decision-making and establish a foundation for:

- aligning diverse values and interests
- shaping policy settings
- fostering collective objectives and solutions that will meet both national and regional economic objectives as well as community concerns.

The principles offer a basis for negotiating collective value propositions within communities and in regional development strategies.

In marine and coastal ecotourism, many of these principles are intrinsic to the activity and part of the business rationale (Fountain & Lück, 2024; Lück et al., 2023; Milne et al., 2021). However, this is not necessarily the case for all operations and far from the case for much of the wider marine and coastal tourism sector. Here, we offer some guidelines for how the wider tourism industry might adopt the blue economy principles. These guidelines are laid out in Table 1.

Table 1: Guidelines for adopting the blue economy principles in marine and coastal tourism (Sustainable Seas Challenge, 2023)

Principle	What might this mean in practice for MCET and tourism more broadly
<p>Te Mana o te Moana Prioritising the health and wellbeing of the moana informed by a Tiriti o Waitangi-led approach, where the rights and responsibilities of tangata whenua are provided for.</p>	<p>Tourism operators employ business practices that respect and incorporate the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Genuine partnerships with tangata whenua underpin tourism operations in and around the moana, supporting kaitiakitanga for present and future operations.</p>
<p>Prosperous Actively transitioning towards resource use that is productive, sustainable, resilient and enhances the ocean and ocean-dependent livelihoods.</p>	<p>Tourism businesses adopt best practice operations based on the blue economy principles to guide their marketing efforts. They may seek recognised national and international environmental and social education and certification schemes and programmes for their businesses, and for individual members of their staff. The Tiaki Promise should be brought to the attention of customers.</p>
<p>Accountable Adopting decision making and reporting frameworks that consider natural, social, and cultural effects of all proposed and actual uses of ocean resources.</p>	<p>Tourism operators base their business decisions on sound research in the social and environmental sciences, and reporting reflects this. Businesses implement the principles of national and international benchmarks and report against these. The organisations and programmes introduced in this report may help identify appropriate schemes. MCET operators are encouraged to actively participate in and support research initiatives and involve communities and customers by exploring citizen science opportunities.</p>

<p>Regenerative Adopting practices that actively support and restore marine ecosystem health.</p>	<p>Based on research, mātauranga Māori, and modern technologies, tourism operators try to minimise their potential and actual negative impacts and thrive on the positive impacts they have on communities and the environment. They may seek funding opportunities to support regenerative tourism business models and contributions to a circular economy.</p>
<p>Intergenerational Empowering holistic governance and management that support the moana, to provide for long-term social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being.</p>	<p>Tourism businesses take an intergenerational management approach to protect and nurture the moana, communities, and employees. The involvement and support of younger generations are a vital step to ensure long-term sustainability.</p>
<p>Inclusive Engaging with communities to achieve multiple benefits for people and the environment.</p>	<p>Tourism operators engage in multi-stakeholder participatory planning and decision making. Novel ways to engage communities in the protection of natural and cultural resources may be developed and implemented.</p>

Training and education programmes

Marine Kaitiaki Course, TRIOCEANS Marine Research and Technology Institute

TRIOCEANS offers an annual Marine Kaitiaki Course, introducing participants to topics, such as marine biology, mātauranga Māori, research, ecotourism, and governance. This course is an employment-focused programme, especially for young adults looking for a career in the marine environments.



<https://www.trioceans.org/kaitiaki/>

→ This course supports the blue economy principles by emphasising Te Mana e te Moana (integrating mātauranga Māori and marine biology), inclusivity (local employment, community aspiration), intergenerationality (specially designed for young adults), prosperity (career training with a focus on sustainable ocean-dependent livelihoods), and accountable (kaitiakitanga).

SMART Operator programme, Department of Conservation

The SMART Operator programme is a voluntary collaboration between



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

commercial operators and the Department of Conservation, aiming to promote responsible and sustainable behaviour around marine mammals in Aotearoa New Zealand.

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/smart-operator-programme/>

→ This programme supports the blue economy principles by emphasising te mana o te moana (responsible behaviour around marine mammals), prosperity (environmentally responsible business practice and marketing), accountability (decision making based on the health of marine wildlife and respective regulations), inclusivity, and intergenerationality (engaging local operators and provide comprehensive education for the wider public).

UNESCO's Ocean Literacy Framework

Ocean Literacy training courses are developed by IOC/UNESCO, specifically targeting educators, media, and government officials. The courses include lectures, case-studies, video messages from guest speakers, activities, quizzes, and online forums, as well as recorded webinars.



<https://oceanliteracy.unesco.org/training/>

→ Courses support the blue economy principles by emphasising te mana o te moana (understanding of human influence on the ocean and the ocean's influence on people), accountability (presents challenges and introduces tools and approaches for decision-making and governance regarding ocean sustainability), and inclusivity (provides courses for educators, media/press, government officials and the general public).

Ocean Literacy Programme, Blue Cradle

Blue Cradle offers an immersive seven-week curriculum for the younger generation (aged 7-13), based on the UNESCO's Ocean Literacy Framework, and includes topics such as ecosystems, human impacts, marine biodiversity adaptations, the physics of seawater, and protection.



<https://bluecradle.org/ocean-literacy/>

→ Blue Cradle supports the blue economy principles by emphasising te mana o te moana (understanding of human influence on the ocean and foster ocean literacy), intergenerationality (creates a foundation for the participants' lifelong engagement with the moana), and inclusivity (designed for children).

The Wise Scheme

The Wise Scheme is a UK-based training scheme for minimising the disturbance of wildlife. The scheme offers various courses for marine wildlife and adventure operators, which are also available as online courses.



<https://www.wisescheme.org/>

→ The Wise Scheme supports the blue economy principles by emphasising te mana o te moana (responsible behaviour around marine wildlife), prosperity (environmentally responsible business practice), accountability (decision making based on the health of marine wildlife; minimising impacts), and inclusivity and intergenerationality (engaging local operators and provide comprehensive education for the wider public).

ACS Distance Education

ACS offers a Certificate in Marine Studies and Ecotourism (approximately 600 hours) in the form of a distance learning programme. Course content covers topics, such as marine studies, ecotourism, business operations, wildlife conservation, adventure tourism, guide training, and many more.



<https://www.acsedu.co.uk/courses/environmental/certificate-in-marine-studies-and-ecotourism-vtr016-980.aspx>

→ The certificate course supports the blue economy principles by emphasising te mana o te moana (responsible ecotour operations and management, knowledge about marine ecology), prosperity (sustainable business operations and marketing), intergenerationality (provide comprehensive education for MCET operators for their long-term success), and being regenerative (wildlife management and conservation).

Organisations, programmes, and initiatives

These organisations and programmes are not specifically geared towards the moana or tourism, but they support some of the blue economy principles by emphasising mātauranga Māori and culture, high-quality sustainable and regenerative (tourism) business practices and marketing, kaitiakitanga, and many more.

DOC Approved, Department of Conservation

A DOC approved label is for businesses who have a current legal agreement with DOC, such as permit holders and concessionaries. The label recognises a significant contribution to tourism and recreation made to conservation in New Zealand.



<https://www.doc.govt.nz/docapprovedlabel>

Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA)

TIA is Aotearoa New Zealand's industry organisation, representing coastal and marine tourism operators. TIA offers a range of information and services.



<https://www.tia.org.nz/>

100% Pure New Zealand

100% Pure New Zealand's task is to promote Aotearoa New Zealand as a tourism destination. The organisation has a range of resources available to help tour operators.

<https://traveltrade.newzealand.com/tools-and-resources/>



Qualmark (100% Pure New Zealand)

Qualmark is New Zealand tourism's official quality assurance organisation, offering certification that highlights tourism providers who are delivering a quality sustainable experience, who have undergone an independent safety check, and who showcase true New Zealand hospitality.

<https://www.qualmark.co.nz/>



NZ Māori Tourism / He Toa Takitini

Māori tourism offers a unique insight into the Māori world that has been shaped by ancestors, culture, traditions, and environment. It offers information, data and a toolkit for industry.

<https://maoritourism.co.nz/>



The Tiaki Promise

The Tiaki Promise is a commitment to care for New Zealand, for now and for future generations. By following the Tiaki Promise, tourists are making a commitment to New Zealand, to act as a guardian, protecting and preserving the country and its people.

https://www.tiakinewzealand.com/en_NZ/



New Zealand Tourism Sustainability Commitment / He Kupu

Taurangi kia Toitū ai te Tāpoittanga

This initiative's vision is to lead the world in sustainable tourism by having every tourism business committed to sustainability by 2025. This includes 12 business commitments (3 each in the areas of economy, visitors, community, and environment).

<https://sustainabletourism.nz/>



Tourism Export Council of New Zealand

The Tourism Export Council of New Zealand (TECNZ) is a trade association established in 1971 that represents the interests of the New Zealand inbound tourism industry. It provides a vital link between tour operators and suppliers of New Zealand products and services and offers opportunities throughout the year for networking and discussion forums to address current issues.



<https://www.tourismexportcouncil.org.nz/>

The New Zealand Cruise Association

The NZCA is an industry body and the leading voice of New Zealand's cruise sector. It offers members insights into global trends, growth opportunities through stakeholder engagement, and regional and national advocacy.

<https://newzealandcruiseassociation.com/>

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

SPREP is an inter-governmental organisation for the environment and regional development, offering a variety of programmes, research, and resources.



<https://www.sprep.org/governance>

Māori-specific knowledge and training

These programmes are not specifically geared towards the moana or tourism, but they support the blue economy principles by emphasising mātauranga Māori, culture, language, and practices.

NZ Māori Tourism / He Toa Takitini

Māori tourism offers you a unique insight into our world that has been shaped by our ancestors, our culture, our traditions, and our environment. It offers information, data and a tool kit for industry.



<https://maoritourism.co.nz/>

Ako Aotearoa

Ako Aotearoa provides an abundance of information, training materials, workshops, and courses on Māori knowledge. While these are mostly geared for the tertiary education sector, there is immense value in these for operators and their staff as well.



<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/>

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa offers a wide range of courses with a Māori focus, such as Māori language, business, professional skills, Māori and Indigenous development, and much more.



<https://www.twoa.ac.nz/nga-akoranga-our-programmes>

Tira Tū Kotahi

Tira Tū Kotahi provides training to build culturally capable teams, organisations and brands.



<https://www.tira.maori.nz/>

Regulations

These following regulations are fundamental to all MCET operators and support the blue economy principles by emphasising the moana and all creatures within it, and sustainable, safe and accountable tourism operations for the long-term benefits of the oceans, wildlife, operators, and communities.

Marine Mammal Protection Act (1978)¹

The MMPA 1978 is an Act to provide for the protection, conservation, and management of marine mammals within New Zealand and within New Zealand fisheries waters.

https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1978/0080/latest/DLM25111.html?search=ts_ac t%40bill%40regulation%40deemedreg_marine+mammals_resel_25_a&p=1

¹ Note: As per the government's website, some of the most recent amendments have not yet been incorporated

Marine Mammal Protection Regulations (1992)¹

After Aotearoa New Zealand has seen the advent and significant growth of marine mammal tourism in the late 1980s and early 1990s, additional regulations were needed to specifically address this burgeoning industry. These regulations include provisions for shore-based, vessel-based and aerial commercial operations to engage with marine mammals.

https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/1992/0322/latest/DLM168286.html?search=ts_act%40bill%40regulation%40deemedreg_marine+mammals_resel_25_a&p=1

Health and Safety at Work (Adventure Activities) Regulations (2016)¹

The regulations apply specifically to adventure tour operators in Aotearoa New Zealand.

After the tragic incident on Whakaari/White Island in December 2019, these regulations have been updated with the [Health and Safety at Work \(Adventure Activities\) Amendment Regulations 2023](#).

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2016/0019/latest/versions.aspx>

Tourism strategies and destination management plans

These strategies and destination management plans throughout Aotearoa New Zealand are not specifically geared towards the moana or tourism, but many support at least some of the blue economy principles by focusing on practices and goals that include mātauranga Māori, inclusivity, sustainability, resilience, and more.

New Zealand-Aotearoa Government Tourism Strategy

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted tourism in New Zealand. The New Zealand-Aotearoa Government Tourism



Strategy sets out a more deliberate and active role for government in tourism. We want to make sure that the many benefits from tourism are realised, while managing the impacts. The government works as a steward, looking across the system to make sure it is working effectively and as an actor through investments and interventions.

<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/immigration-and-tourism/tourism/new-zealand-aotearoa-government-tourism-strategy>

Regional Tourism New Zealand

Regional Tourism New Zealand (RTNZ) is the peak body for Aotearoa New Zealand's Regional Tourism Organisations, each of



which are the representative of the local government investment in the tourism sector for their community. RTNZ aims to encourage better collaboration and coordination amongst regional tourism operators as well as ensuring collective engagement and consultation on issues critical to the development of tourism in communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.

<https://rtnz.org.nz/resources/>

Iwi Management Plans (various district councils)

The Ministry for the Environment Manatū Mō Te Taiao offers information about iwi management plans, and links to some



examples. These websites offer valuable information for MCET operators to acquaint themselves with the iwi management plans in general, and specific plans for their respective area.

<https://www.qualityplanning.org.nz/node/1006>

Destination Management Organisations North Island

Northland Inc <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-northland-inc/>

Tātaki Auckland Unlimited <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-tataki-auckland-unlimited/>

Destination Hauraki Gulf Coromandel <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-destination-hauraki-coromandel/>

Tourism Bay of Plenty <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-tourism-bay-of-plenty/>

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-hamilton-and-waikato-tourism/>

Rotorua NZ <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-rotoruanz/>

Tairāwhiti Gisborne <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-tairawhiti-gisborne/>

Destination Great Lake Taupō <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-destination-great-lake-taupo/>

Visit Ruapehu <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-visit-rupehu/>

Venture Taranaki <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-venture-taranaki/>

Hawke's bay Tourism <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-hawkes-bay-tourism/>

Whanganui & Partners <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-whanganui-partners/>

Central Economic Development Agency (Manawatū) <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-central-economic-development-agency/>

Destination Wairarapa <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-destination-wairarapa/>

Wellington NZ <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-wellingtonnz/>

Destination Management Organisations South Island

Destination Marlborough <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-destination-marlborough/>

Nelson Tasman <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-nelson-tasman/>

Visit Hurunui <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-visit-hurunui/>

Destination Kaikōura <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-destination-kaikoura/>

Development West Coast <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-development-west-coast/>

Christchurch NZ <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-christchurchnz/>

Mackenzie Tourism <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-mackenzie-tourism/>

Venture Timaru <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-venture-timaru/>

Tourism Waitaki <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-tourism-waitaki/>

Destination Queenstown <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-destination-queenstown/>

Lake Wānaka Tourism <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-lake-wanaka-tourism/>

Tourism Central Otago <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-tourism-central-otago/>

Enterprise Dunedin <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-enterprise-dunedin/>

Great South <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-great-south/>

Clutha Development <https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-clutha-development/>

Reference works to academic publications

Dotterel Publishing



Dotterel Publishing makes academic annotated bibliographies available to the wider community. The bibliographies can be downloaded free of charge. Many of these academic publications report on research, including on blue economy principles, with a focus on marine wildlife and the cruise ship industry.

Black, C., & Lück, M. (2020). *Human interactions with turtles & tortoises: An annotated bibliography*. Dotterel Publishing. https://www.dotterelpublishing.com/s/Annotated-Bibliography-Turtle-watching_PDF.pdf

Elmahdy, Y. M., Porter, B. A., & Lück, M. (2020). *Human interactions with seals, sea lions and walruses: An annotated bibliography*. Dotterel Publishing. <https://www.dotterelpublishing.com/s/Annotated-Bibliography-Seal-watching-PDF.pdf>

Lück, M., Porter, B. A., Elmahdy, Y. M. (2019). *Birdwatching: An annotated bibliography*. Dotterel Publishing. <https://www.dotterelpublishing.com/s/Annotated-Bibliography-Birdwatching.pdf>

Pagel, C. D., & Lück, M. (2020). *Human interactions with sharks, rays and skates: An annotated bibliography*. Dotterel Publishing. <https://www.dotterelpublishing.com/s/Annotated-Bibliography-Elasmobranchs-pdf.pdf>

Radić, A., & Lück, M. (2020). *Cruise tourism: An annotated bibliography*. Dotterel Publishing. <https://www.dotterelpublishing.com/s/Annotated-Bibliography-Cruise-Tourism-pdf.pdf>

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