



# Our Seas Project 1.2.1

## Social Licence to Operate

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# Achieving and maintaining a social licence to operate – some New Zealand experience

James Baines  
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# Our focus

Conceptualising Social Licence to Operate (SLO)

Operations in the coastal marine environment

Emerging awareness and practice



# First steps

Literature review – with coastal focus, mainly post 2000

My focus today – aquaculture experience

# SLO – the concept

... an **outcome**

... of various **processes** ...

... from **relationships** between parties

... overlapping interests in **contested public resources**

... a **hierarchy/spectrum** of possible outcomes

... different perspectives

# What does 'social licence' mean?

*“an outcome from doing a whole lot of other things well and shouldn't be a goal in and of itself”*

*“a relationship which fosters mutual understanding and trust between operator and community of interest”*

*“a valuable asset ... and a fragile asset”*

*“a cost of doing business in a public space”*

# Who is involved?

## Company perspectives



# Who is involved? Community perspectives



# Approaches to engagement?

Company practice

Large companies

Small companies

# Approaches to engagement?

## Community suggestions

*“have liaison groups for the different sectors of the aquaculture industry”*

*“Get a little focus group together .... and say ‘how do we deal with this issue?’”*

*“community reps on the senior exec team or at a board meeting”*

*“... real-time monitoring systems so we can go online, that'd be quite big news.”*

# Factors most likely to influence success in SLO?

Company ownership: local, national, foreign?

Company (operational) scale: large or small  
- relationships – how personal? how many?

Company history – track record (legacy?)

# Challenges to SLO?

## Community perspectives

Diversity of views and positions within a community

Some see bad in everything

Some unwilling to change a position

Keeping constituencies happy when they don't get all they wanted

The ethics of accepting \$\$ without checking alignment in values

# Challenges to SLO?

## Company perspectives

Growth challenges community acceptance of status quo

Various “squeaky wheels”

Changes in community – new arrivals

Poor communication/inconsistent messages

Dealing with national advocacy groups – ‘virtual community’ – no personal relationship

# Next steps

- Interviews with Māori and other enterprises, to document other experiences and perspectives
- Discourse analysis – how the phrase ‘social license’ is being used in public statements and documents
- Case study – survey to assess social license of a given company as perceived by its community(ies)