FAQ – Huon's Western Australian Kingfish Zone

Why is Huon looking to farm Kingfish in Western Australia?
There are several considerations behind Huon's move into Western Australia, with the main being that with the decline in Kingfish wild catch, there is a significant opportunity to fill a gap in the market for a sustainably Australian-grown white-fleshed fish.

We believe that Western Australia is the right place to set up commercial kingfish operations as there is an abundance investment-ready lease space, the water temperature is ideal for optimal growth, and the government and community are open to investment.

What is the Mid West Aquaculture Development Zone and why was it created?
The Western Australian Government has created two investment-ready aquaculture zones: the Mid West Aquaculture Development Zone and one further north in the Kimberly. These zones have been created with the purpose of streamlining and integrating the approvals processes for commercial aquaculture projects.

The Western Australian Government is committed to the development of a sustainable marine aquaculture industry and the creation of new jobs. Establishing aquaculture development zones for marine finfish will provide opportunities for existing aquaculture operations to expand and new aquaculture operations to be created in Western Australia. This will provide significant economic benefits to the local community through job creation and regional economic diversification.

How big is the area that Huon has secured?
Huon has secured an area of 2,200Ha within the Mid West Aquaculture Development Zone. At present, Huon is proposing to set up two leases within the zone of 161.1Ha and 120.1Ha respectively, with the pens taking up less than five per cent of the surface of the zone.

How will this impact recreational and commercial fishers?
Fishers can still traverse through, and fish in the zone, providing that they are outside the lease markers, and do not interfere with the pens, any associated infrastructure or fish stocks.

It is possible that some forms of commercial fishing, such as trawling, may be incompatible with the zone due to underwater pen moorings.

Will you transfer any fish between NSW / WA?
To ensure the success of any farming operation, strong biosecurity practices are needed. These practices stipulate that our fish cannot be transferred between farming areas e.g. between New South Wales and Western Australia.

It is also important to note that New South Wales and Western Australia have their own distinct populations of Kingfish. This, coupled with strong biosecurity practices, means that on no occasion will Huon transfer Kingfish between states.

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What are gill and skin flukes and should I be worried about fish being bathed in Hydrogen Peroxide to remove them?
Kingfish are susceptible to naturally-occurring skin and gill flukes which are a worm-like parasite. If untreated, flukes can cause injury and in extreme cases, death. In order to remove the flukes, the Kingfish are given a Hydrogen Peroxide bath under veterinary supervision.

Hydrogen Peroxide is used across the global aquaculture industry as a fluke treatment and in the presence of sunlight, such as during bathing, it harmlessly breaks down into water and oxygen.

To bathe a pen of Kingfish, we insert a liner (similar to a large tarp) into the pen to seal off the water and Kingfish from the ocean. Our trained staff add a Hydrogen Peroxide solution to the liner which dilutes with the water trapped inside.

The liner is left in place for 20-30mins, during which time the Hydrogen Peroxide breaks down, and the liner can be removed.

Frequency of bathing depends on the presence of flukes, however, each pen generally receives a double bath treatment every six weeks.

What is the lifecycle of a Kingfish?
Kingfish spawning can be triggered at any time of the year by manipulating lighting to mimic natural triggers. Once the broodstock (mature breeding stock) spawn, the eggs and milt (fish sperm) mix and form eggs. These eggs are carefully hatched and grown into fingerlings (small fish) which takes five months on average.

The fingerlings are ready to go to sea once they are big enough that they can't slip through the nets.

From our trial, we have learnt that in warm waters, Kingfish are market ready in approximately 12 months.

What is the difference between warm-water grown Kingfish and cold-water grown?
The difference is the time the Kingfish take to grow to harvest size. In warmer waters, Kingfish experience year-round growth, whereas in cooler waters, growth is slowed over winter.

Feedback from consumers is that the warm water grown Kingfish is of exceptional quality and taste.

The NSW site had some challenges, how is this site any different?
Every farming site is unique, particularly in the marine environment with a range environmental considerations.

The research trial lease in New South Wales is in a very exposed site which, earlier this year, waves of over 11 meters passed through. In comparison, the lease in Western Australia is relatively sheltered behind the Abrolhos Islands. Wave modelling has shown that the new lease will be sheltered from the worst of the weather, which will be an added layer of protection for the operation.

As an outcome of the trial in NSW, we have made changes to some of our pen rigging and implemented improved maintenance operations. These are learnings that we intend to apply to our

new lease in WA.

When will Huon put fish in the water?
It is too early to say when we will be putting the first fish in the water as there are numerous milestones which need to be achieved first, including; rigorous planning, community engagement, conducting an EPBC self-referral, securing a shore base, the development of a nursery, plus setting up farm infrastructure and establishing a knowledgeable team.

Where can I find out more?
You can find out more from our website [insert URL once published]. As the project progresses, we will make more information publically available on our website. If there is anything that you would like to see added, feel free to contact us.

Will there be employment opportunities for locals?
A successful aquaculture industry brings many economic and social benefits to the region through employment, flow-on benefits to local businesses, as well as local community investment and more generally through participation.

Like any responsible local company, we want to be active participants and contributors to the communities we are part of. So where possible, we employ from local communities, use local contractors and suppliers, and provide traineeships and work.

We are proud to be able to provide meaningful employment opportunities in regional areas of Australia.

What about financial support for community groups?
We are also proud to support our communities through our Helping Hand Community Grants program as well as offering sponsorship and donations on a case-by-case basis. Through these programs we aim at capacity building in our local communities and schools, and help to get grass-roots programs off the ground.

We currently have a round of Helping Hand Community Grants open and more information can be found here: https://www.huonaqua.com.au/community-grants/

What will you be doing about marine debris?
We regularly conduct marine debris clean-ups along the shorelines near our operations where we collect all debris, not just farm-related materials.

In Tasmania, we have setup a Marine Debris Hotline where people can report debris for removal. We combine this with conducting regular proactive clean-ups on the shorelines that we, as a company, have 'adopted'.

Our intention is to apply the same process to our WA operations.