

# SPEARFISHING NEW ZEALAND

Newsletter • Q1 2026 • January – March



## A Message from the President

---

What a quarter, I won't lie, it has felt like trying to drink from a fire hydrant picking up the president role at the start of the year. We've hosted a World Championship, run our Nationals, adopted a new constitution, elected a new committee, and taken the first real steps toward building SNZ into the organisation it needs to be for the next generation of New Zealand spearfishers. It has been busy, but I am really excited to be in the role, and also to be surrounded by such an amazing committee. It has also been really motivating hearing from many in the community that are keen to also help grow and support our awesome sport and recreational activity.

Rather than just a list of events, I want to do something a little different and share where SNZ is headed, why, and what we've been doing this quarter against each of those priorities. But first — meet your team.

### Rob Harrison

President, Spearfishing New Zealand

## Meet Your 2026 SNZ Committee

---

SNZ is governed by a volunteer committee elected at the AGM. Here's who's looking after the sport you love this year.

### Rob Harrison — President



Rob grew up spending summers on the Coromandel and Great Barrier Island, getting in the water from an early age. He was fortunate to have great mates from underwater hockey who introduced him to spearfishing, and is now passionate about paying that forward. Rob founded Spearfishing FUNdamentals, was the secretary and then president of the Auckland Freediving club, has previously served two years as SNZ Secretary. He is also an AIDA Master Freediving Instructor. Safety in the water is something he genuinely cares about, not just a box to tick.

**One thing he wants to do for SNZ in 2026:** *Getting the basics sorted so we can lift up and improve the safety, accessibility, and fun of our awesome sport.*

**Matt Kaio** — Secretary



Matt is well known in the spearing community. As an ex Navy Captain, he comes with a wealth of experience and wisdom. Matt has been instrumental in growing then Spearfishing FUNdamentals club and is the master at enticing people to come out for a spear when the weather is good and the sea is flat.

**One thing he wants to do for SNZ in 2026:** *Keep building on the foundations to make our comps even more fair, fun and above all safe.*

---

**Peter MacIntyre** — Treasurer



Pete has been diving for years and loves everything about this sport — especially the community and the people it brings together. Based in Auckland, his diving home is Kuaotunu on the Coromandel, where his family has had a place for 53 years. After getting so much from spearfishing over the years, Pete decided it was time to give something back. He's been SNZ Treasurer for nearly three years now.

**One thing he wants to do for SNZ in 2026:** *See SNZ remain financially strong — so we can keep supporting teams, giving younger divers a pathway in, and promoting the sport to new participants.*

---

**Laura Kuggeleijn** — Communications Officer



Laura is a passionate spearfisher and freediver based in Pāpāmoa, Bay of Plenty. With a background in hunting and surf lifesaving, she is relatively new to spearfishing but has competed in almost every Spearfishing NZ event over the past four years, building strong experience and connection within the community. She served as Secretary on the committee last year and is now stepping into a creative role as Communications Officer, focusing on merch, posters, event comms, and social media. Laura is passionate about making the sport more accessible—especially for newcomers, youth, and women—while ensuring information is clear and reaches everyone. She values fairness in rules and processes, and is committed to creating events that feel safe, inclusive, and fun. Guided by kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga, she is driven to support the future of the spearfishing community

---

**Dwane Herbert** — Committee Member



Dwane has been spearfishing since he was five years old. He grew up attending NZ Nationals and competitions around the country, and now works as a commercial pāua and kina diver based in Bluff. Few people in this sport have as much lived experience — from competition to commercial harvest.

**One thing he wants to do for SNZ in 2026:** *Help rebuild NZ spearfishing clubs from the grassroots up — getting young, keen divers out on club dives and into the sport.*

---

**Chris Marshall** — Committee Member



Chris is a competitive spearfisher and freediver. He has represented NZ several times in both. Chris has been a committee member for some time and has quietly worked on many significant improvements, including working with Jenni Edwards on our new constitution and club reincorporation this year.

**One thing he wants to do for SNZ in 2026:** *Ensure we remain an incorporated club and adhere to the new rules and guidelines, and of course our new constitution*

**David Packman** — Committee Member



David Packman has been spearfishing since the early eighties when he was a junior in the Gisborne underwater club.

Having had a strong influence in the establishment of the South Island spearfishing club and continuing to support the mentoring of new Spearo's.

**One thing he wants to do for SNZ in 2026:** He would like to expand on the mentoring and support for junior divers to ensure our sport develops both safely with a strong emphasis on sustainability.

---

## Blair Herbert — Records Keeper



Blair has been diving for many years and has seen the sport evolve. He comes in to the role with a bit of experience on the other side of the ledger, he's had a few records accepted in the past, some are still there, and some have been beaten. He has some fresh ideas for new categories, and these will be announced as they are finalised.

### **One thing he wants to do for SNZ in 2026:**

*Reinvigorate the National records and introduce a new meritorious category.*

---

## A note on Ash Turner and Spencer Hall

Both Ash Turner and Spencer Hall have stepped down from formal committee roles. Rather than carrying responsibilities that didn't suit their current capacity, both have chosen to support SNZ through smaller, focused initiatives — and that's exactly the kind of flexible contribution that keeps this organisation running. We're genuinely grateful for everything they've given, and glad they're staying involved.

## Communications Officer

With Ash stepping down from her committee role, Laura Kuggeleijn moves into the Communications Officer position. Laura brings a wealth of SNZ knowledge and will be taking the reins on how we connect and communicate with our members going forward. Watch this space!

## Our Purpose

---

SNZ exists to responsibly grow and advocate for spearfishing in Aotearoa New Zealand — making it safer, more accessible, more respected, and upholding our role as kaitiaki of the ocean.

Our new constitution, adopted unanimously at the January AGM, formally establishes SNZ as:

- The national representative body for the amateur sport of spearfishing and the interests of amateur spearfishers in New Zealand
- The official NZ Spearfishing Sporting Body affiliated to NZUA, the World Underwater Federation (CMAS), the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and ARISF

Everything we do as a committee is organised around five strategic pillars. We won't always have capacity to develop each of these out every quarter, but here's what we've been up to under each of them this quarter.


### **Pillar 1 — Safety & Advocacy**

*Make spearfishing safer every year, and be the authoritative voice for safe, responsible practice in NZ.*


Every event we run is built around safety first. Our pairs system has a remarkable record — no deaths in organised competition since its introduction in the early 1990s.

All three events this quarter ran with mandatory safety briefings, start and end-of-day roll calls, and patrol boat coverage. At the Worlds, with international competitors unfamiliar with our pairs system, this required careful briefing and enforcement — and ran without incident.

The Catfish Cull was hit by a significant storm on Friday night but came through safely — a testament to good preparation and the resilience of our competitors and organisers.

 **What you told us**

Safety felt inconsistent, particularly at the Catfish Cull and in busy areas.

 **What we're doing**

Strengthening on-water safety presence, reinforcing expectations in briefings, and using the event app to improve communication and coordination during events.

 **Pillar 2 — Talent Development & Performance**

*Create a clear, fair pathway from new competitor to elite athlete — without gatekeeping.*

Committee member Dwane Herbert and co-opted advisor Moss Burmester are leading the development of a formal Athlete Development Plan for NZ spearfishing. This is about building a genuine system — not just celebrating winners, but growing the depth and quality of our competitive field at every level.

Dwane and Moss will be reaching out to key SNZ members, clubs, and others in the coming weeks. If you have views on what a genuine athlete development pathway should look like — whether you're a seasoned competitor, a junior coming through, or a club organiser — they want to hear from you.

On the international stage, SNZ has contributed \$10,000 toward the cost of sending a team to the Interpacifics in April. International representation is expensive for everyone involved, and SNZ believes it's our job to help shoulder that. The team heading to the Interpacifics is: Herb, Sandy, Dwane, James, Scotty, Stacey, Barry, Razor, Jacky, Alisha, Annabelle, and Quinn. We wish them all the very best of luck — go well and represent Aotearoa with pride.

 **Pillar 3 — Growing Participation & Clubs**

*Grow participation by lowering barriers to entry and strengthening clubs as social anchors.*

Three major events this quarter — and all of them well attended.

**National Championships — Great Barrier Island**

This year's Nationals were held at Great Barrier Island. With no host club available, Darren Shields stepped up and organised the majority of the event, with support from the SNZ committee — a significant effort that deserves real recognition. Congratulations again to Jackson Shields and Paul Best on the win.

**Catfish Cull**

Despite a wild Friday night storm, the Catfish Cull was a hugely successful event — with competitors collectively eradicating 617 catfish from Lake Taupō. SNZ President Rob Harrison took out the event alongside co-opted advisor Moss Burmester — a combination of sharp eyes and, some might say, the considerable advantage of diving with an ex-Olympic swimmer.

**2026 World Freshwater Spearfishing Championships — Lake Taupō**

The 2026 WFSC ran from 10–14 March at Lake Taupō, with competitors from around the world gathering at Motuoapa for two days of competition. Together they eradicated an extraordinary 1,917 catfish from the lake. A huge thank you to Competition Director Jenni Edwards, the Motuoapa Fishing and Boating Club, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Spencer our area setup and weighmaster extraordinaire and every volunteer who made it happen.

## Open Champion — All Divisions

Brittany Brockway & Cory Fults — USA — 176.5

New Zealand took out the Overall Winning Country title — a fantastic result for the team and everyone who competed under the NZ flag.

### Juniors

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sam Higgle & Harrison Ratahi — NZL — 83.4
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Emmett Holmes & Merrick Suiter — USA — 50.8
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Moorhouse & Jake Western — USA — 48.6

### Masters

- 1<sup>st</sup> Darren Shields & Ian Warnock — NZL — 99.6
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Ken Lee & Gerald Lim — USA/SGP — 87.8
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Gunther Pfrengle & Michael Arentz — AUS — 58.6

### Womens

- 1<sup>st</sup> Nancy Wendel & Jess Price — POR/ENG — 101.1
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Kerry Walden & Ciara Slater — NZL — 84.6
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Elise Clynes & Fiona Wilson — NZL — 77.3

### Mens

- 1<sup>st</sup> Ben Smith & Kolt Johnson — NZL — 136.9
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Chris Marshall & Rowan Virbickas — NZL — 131.0
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Michael Genereux & Barnaby J Acfalle — GUM — 123.2

### Mixed

- 1<sup>st</sup> Brittany Brockway & Cory Fults — USA — 176.5
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Jacky Edwards & Ben Laurie — NZL — 166.5
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Shelby Peterson & Ryan Peterson — USA — 98.6

#### What you told us

You loved the simple, accessible formats and social vibe. Weigh-ins were slow, some parts felt ad hoc, and competitors were being asked to do too much on the day.

#### What we're doing

Defining committee vs competitor roles upfront. Structured pre-weigh staging to speed things up. Tightening event-day planning, supported by the app for real-time scoring, updates, and coordination.

## Pillar 4 — Transparency, Trust & Governance

*Operate in a way that earns trust — even when decisions are unpopular.*

The AGM on 30 January at Great Barrier Island was a significant milestone. With 42 members present, we adopted the new SNZ Constitution 2026 — a full rewrite aligned to the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. Key changes:

- Financial year amended to 1 November – 31 October
- AGM may be held virtually
- Proxy votes not permitted at General Meetings (quorum remains 20)
- Competition Directors may compete in non-Open events at Nationals, with an alternate CD appointed
- Age-related trophies now determined by age on the day of competition (passed 25–7)

The Treasurer reported a surplus of \$63,689 for the year to 31 March 2025, with a bank balance above \$47,000. Accounts accepted unanimously.

SNZ knows the admin side of our events hasn't always been smooth — fragmented systems, manual processes, and too much friction for competitors trying to enter, stay informed, or access results. We're grateful for the patience of those who've been navigating that, and we hear the frustration. That's exactly what's been driving the investment in new technology this quarter — and the improvements are already showing.

#### What you told us

Rules and expectations weren't always clear, especially for newer divers. Some parts of events felt ad hoc or last-minute.

#### What we're doing

Improving pre-event comms and briefings, with clearer guidance shared ahead of time and via the app — so rules, boundaries, and expectations are easy to find and easy to follow.

## Pillar 5 — Kaitiakitanga & Sustainability

*Ensure spearfishing contributes positively to marine stewardship and sustainable harvest.*

The Worlds at Lake Taupō was conducted with the authorisation of the Tuwharetoa Trust Board, with explicit rules protecting koura, eels, and the broader lake environment. The continued goodwill of Ngāti Tūwharetoa and the trout fishing community is what gives us access to events like this — and we don't take that lightly.

Between the Catfish Cull and the Worlds, SNZ events at Lake Taupō this quarter saw 2,534 catfish eradicated — a noxious pest whose removal actively benefits the lake ecosystem. Our events are among the few in any sport that leave the environment better than they found it.

But the committee is honest that we have more work to do here. Kaitiakitanga as a genuine commitment — not just a line in the constitution — means being more intentional about how we engage with iwi, how we approach species management, and how SNZ contributes to the broader conversation about sustainable harvest. One area already under active review is the Nationals eligible fish list, and we'll have more to share on that in the next newsletter.

## SNZ Technology — What's New

---

Many of you will have already seen improvements in action. The Catfish Cull this year was fully online — real-time results and a dynamic leaderboard you could follow from home. The Worlds was another step up, with live scoring across all divisions and over 7,000 views of the app over the competition and build up!

We have now also launched:

### **NZ Spearfishing Records System**

All NZ spearfishing records are publicly searchable online. Browse by species, division, and category, view provisional records during the 30-day dispute window, and submit a new record claim with photo uploads directly through the platform.

### **SNZ Membership**

SNZ now has a formal membership model with a \$10 annual fee. This isn't a money-making exercise — it's about compliance and safety. Our new constitution requires us to maintain a proper membership register, and membership is also what allows us to properly manage safety obligations across our events.

To make it cost-neutral for regular competitors, entry fees for Nationals and the Catfish Cull will be reduced next year to offset the membership fee. If you compete, you won't be out of pocket. If you competed at the Nationals, Catfish Cull, or Worlds this year, you're on our list — just sign up and your fee will be automatically waived - it's included. Just sign up as a new member with the same email you used to register for one of these events and the \$10 joining fee will be automatically waived. Do this at <https://spearfishingnz.netlify.app/membership> and you're good to go.

Don't want to have to remember this web address every time? You can add an icon to your mobile device from the members area once you sign up and then sign in.

### Competition Management for Clubs & Event Organisers

We've built a competition management platform for SNZ members and affiliated clubs. It handles the full lifecycle of running an event — direct sharable link to the event, online entry and payment, merchandise management (shirts, jackets, and more), automated scoring, real-time leaderboards, results published directly to the SNZ Hub, and social media posting and real-time event coverage tools so your community can follow along as it happens. No spreadsheets, no manual tallying, no chasing entry fees by email.

If you're interested in using it for your club or event, reach out to Rob and he will walk you through it.

Everything is at: [spearfishingnz.netlify.app](https://spearfishingnz.netlify.app)

This platform is the infrastructure that makes the new membership model and our constitutional obligations workable. We'll keep improving it.

---

## Around the Regions — Other News & Events

---

Plenty has been happening beyond the SNZ run events this quarter. Here's a snapshot from around the country.

### North Island Championships

The North Island Champs produced some great competition. Congratulations to the top three Open Grade teams:

- 1st — Nat Davey & Ben Laurie | 18 fish | 2,042 pts
- 2nd — Chris Marshall & Dave Mullins | 16 fish | 1,858 pts
- 3rd — Duncan Henderson & Ben Steele | 15 fish | 1,585 pts

And in B Grade:

- 1st — Tyler Zimmerman & Jaidyn Milne | 13 fish | 1,440 pts
- 2nd — Liam Kawana, Ray Jones & Kaihamu Cooper | 14 fish | 1,391 pts
- 3rd — Matt Thompson, Geoff McDonnell & Ollie Van Rooyen | 12 fish | 1,306 pts

### South Island Championships — Dunedin

The South Island Champs were held in Dunedin on 1 March. Top three teams:

- 1st — Callum Milne & Binn Wharton | 10 fish | 1,090 pts
- 2nd — Pete Dryden & Torsten Sandmark | 9 fish | 999 pts

- 3rd — Sean Higgins & Jason Hursthouse | 9 fish | 994 pts

Special awards went to Jason Hursthouse (Most Meritorious Fish — Tarakihi), John Mowbray (Biggest Fish — 3.1kg Moki), Grant Sinclair (Biggest Greenbone — 1.5kg), and Pete Dryden (Veterans Trophy). Well done to all who competed.

### **FUNdees Fish Bingo — One Month to Go!**

With just one month remaining, the FUNdees Fish Bingo leaderboard is heating up. Andrew Kartsev currently leads the overall standings with an impressive 11,450 points — but it's far from over, with Simon Holt and Dan O'Donnell close behind.

In the women's division, Kerry Walden — fresh from competing at the World Freshwater Championships — is sitting at the top of the women's leaderboard and making a strong case for the title. Watch this space.

You can follow the live leaderboard at [fishbingo.netlify.app](https://fishbingo.netlify.app). There's still time to get involved if you haven't already.

## **Upcoming Events**

---

### **Mercury Bay Open — 31<sup>st</sup> May (Kings Birthday weekend)**

This is a great competition - well run by seasoned spearos and event managers. This year we are taking registrations and payment for the Mercury Bay open via the snazzy new app discussed already. Both competitors will need to be signed up SNZ members to be able to enter, so do this first before entering your team. Entry and full comp details can be found here <https://spearfishingnz.netlify.app/c/2> results will be real-time and for those at home, you can follow the action as it unfolds via the leaderboard.

## **Thank You**

---

This has been one of the biggest quarters in SNZ's recent history — a World Championship on home soil, a new constitution, a new committee, and the foundations of a proper national system being laid.

None of it happens without the people who show up, volunteer, compete, and care about this sport. Thank you.

Questions, feedback, or ideas? Reach out to any committee member directly, or feel free to drop me a line on [president@spearfishingnz.co.nz](mailto:president@spearfishingnz.co.nz)

*Ngā mihi,*

**Rob Harrison** President, Spearfishing New Zealand