



## Coastal communities: economic impacts of tourism

**While people have been flocking to the water to enjoy summer, MFish has hooked up with the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI) to research the economic impacts of marine tourism on two coastal communities.**

Focussing initially on Stewart Island and the Tutukaka coast, three online surveys are running until the end of Easter, to capture information on people's activities during the peak summer season.

The surveys target visitors, residents, and business groups.

By looking more closely at these people's interactions with the marine environment, the aim is to get a better understanding of how marine tourism impacts the area and how dependent communities are on marine tourism.

Marine tourism incorporates eco-tourism (such as whale or dolphin watching), recreational fishing or recreational charter boat fishing, and a number of other marine-related activities.

NZTI Director, Simon Milne, says the research is important because tourism, as a source of income for coastal communities, is growing around the world and New Zealand is no exception.

"This work will help us develop an approach that will give us a barometer over time so we can measure long-term implications of the economic impacts of marine tourism.

"It will certainly have value for other communities and will feed into an ongoing programme for communities that have fisheries and marine heritage.

"Ultimately it's about gathering information so that people can make better decisions."

MFish socio-economic analyst, Eugene Rees, says recreational fishing and marine tourism plays a significant role in maximising the value New Zealanders obtain through the use of sustainable fisheries resources.

"We recognise we need to understand a lot more, particularly the role that recreational fishing and marine tourism plays within coastal communities. This is an excellent opportunity to investigate just that."

Eugene says the Tutukaka Coast and Stewart Island were chosen as areas of research because they provide a good contrast – Tutukaka is a more established community while Stewart Island is showing signs of growth for marine tourism.

Results of the surveys are expected to be fed back to key stakeholders around June.

