

Seasquirt fears spark appeal against salmon farm

By [SOPHIE PREECE](#) - The Marlborough Express | Friday, 4 May 2007

A Marlborough mussel farmer has appealed the Marlborough District Council's decision to grant resource consent for a new salmon farm at Clay Point in the Tory Channel.

Bruce Hearn is concerned New Zealand King Salmon will spread the seasquirt didemnum vexillum already present on two of its farms if it progresses with the development.

"It's pretty simple. We don't want NZKS to be able to transfer cages from infected farms and spread the vexillum around the marine environment in the vicinity and to our marine farm around the corner," Mr Hearn said yesterday.

The seasquirt has been identified as a serious risk to mussel farms. Mr Hearn said he had been in discussions with King Salmon and they had already come up with some possible solutions.

Marlborough District Council resource consents officer Keith Heather said the concerns raised by Mr Hearn's appeal were focussed on biosecurity, and it was likely the Environment Court would direct the parties to mediation before it would go to any court hearing.

The council granted consent for the two hectares of salmon farm structures in March, ordering a precautionary approach in terms of feed discharge.

One of the arguments King Salmon raised at the February 13 hearing was that consenting to the application would allow the company to fallow its vexillum affected Otanerau Bay site, giving mussel farms in that bay the chance to eliminate the organism.

NZ King Salmon chief executive Paul Steere said yesterday the company hoped to be able to mediate through the situation and to avoid any long delays if possible. He said a range of actions were being taken to tackle the issue of the vexillum.