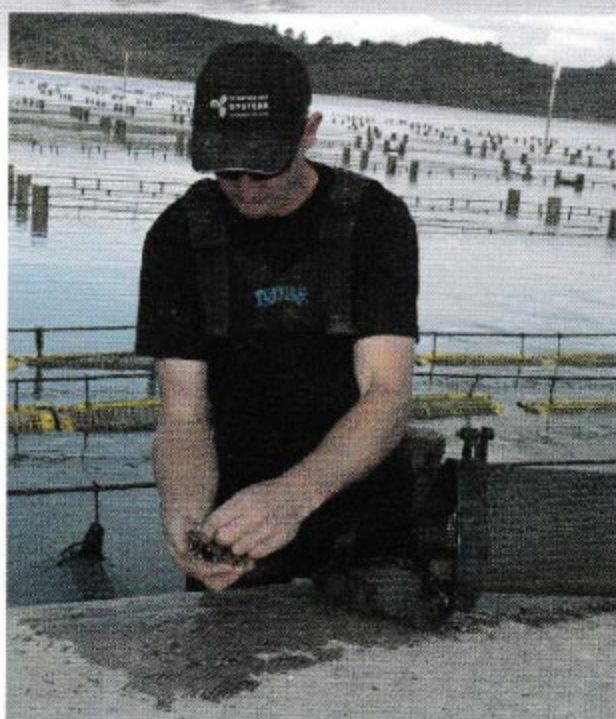
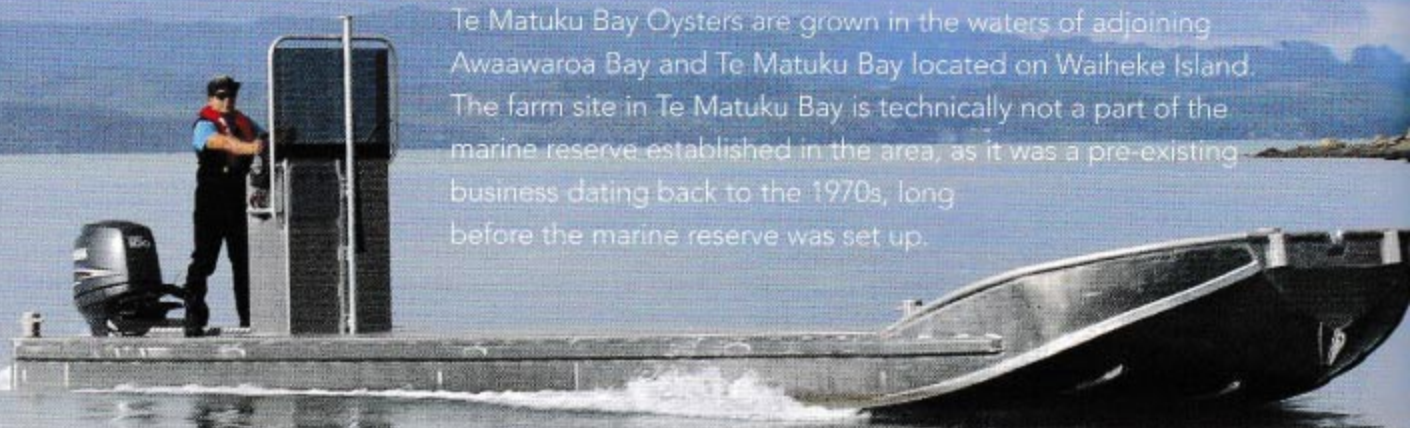


Commando OYSTER BARGE

Te Matuku Bay Oysters are grown in the waters of adjoining Awaawaroa Bay and Te Matuku Bay located on Waiheke Island. The farm site in Te Matuku Bay is technically not a part of the marine reserve established in the area, as it was a pre-existing business dating back to the 1970s, long before the marine reserve was set up.



Nat Upchurch
sorting spat

What's in a barge?

The first requirement of an oyster farm barge is *stability*, closely followed by *durability*. The barge has to offer a sturdy/safe/low/flat platform capable of carrying up to 10 tonnes of harvested product. The barge must sit low in the water for ease of lifting oysters onboard. Ideally, it should fit easily between rows of oysters – at 5m apart – so no wider than, say, 3.5m and up to 12m long.

Farm workers spend much of their time in waist-deep water. Remember, a barge will need to be manhandled on the farm, and powered by a single outboard motor, with a raised bow, with a slight dead-rise so as to assist in steerage.

Te Matuku Bay's oyster barge *Tionui* (which means 'plentiful oysters') fits these design specs well.

Designed by De Villiers Design in Kerikeri, the hull is extremely tough. The design is a breakaway from the traditional frames and stringers. Because of the expected heavy loads, it uses a tight network of frames and longitudinal bulkheads – making for a network of strong, solid deck-to-hull sections giving a strong, robust big-ship double bottom type of construction.

This is important because the barge may be beached fully loaded and then must support the deadweight of a tonne of oysters per square metre in crates on deck without risk of crushing.

Built by Commando Boats in Auckland and constructed from 5083 marine grade alloy, the hull bottom is 6mm plate, the sides and bulkheads 5mm and the deck 6mm tread plate. There are four longitudinal grounding strakes under the hull to assist with tracking and grounding.

There is a low, raised bow section with an open deck locker for ropes and anchor and a mooring bollard. There is also a small lockable deck locker for attractive items. Down aft, the steering console is simple and positioned just ahead of the outboard motor.

Powered by a 100hp four-stroke outboard motor, the

Today the farms are operated by Waiheke Marine Farms Limited – a joint venture between three Waiheke families – although the oysters are marketed and branded as Te Matuku Oysters.

Like most oyster farms, Te Matuku Bay is still recovering from the 2010 oyster virus. The farm buys spat from the Cawthron Institute hatchery in Nelson and has the capacity to reach full production of 150,000 dozen oysters per year in the next few years.

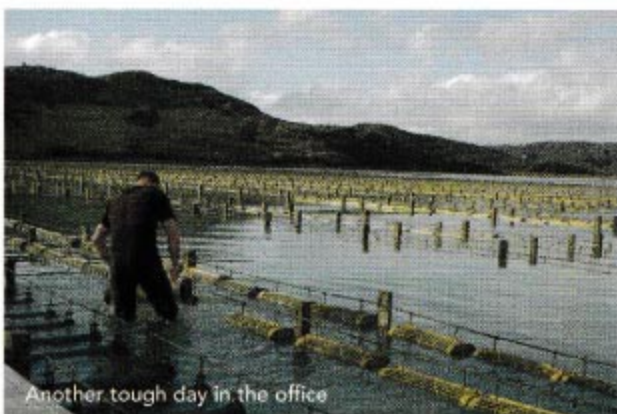
Given the demands of this tough, labour-intensive business, all the equipment the farm uses has to be both well-designed and hard-wearing. The workhorse of the farm is the oyster barge – and its design is something that is well-considered.



Under construction at Commando Boats



Look at that clear work area!

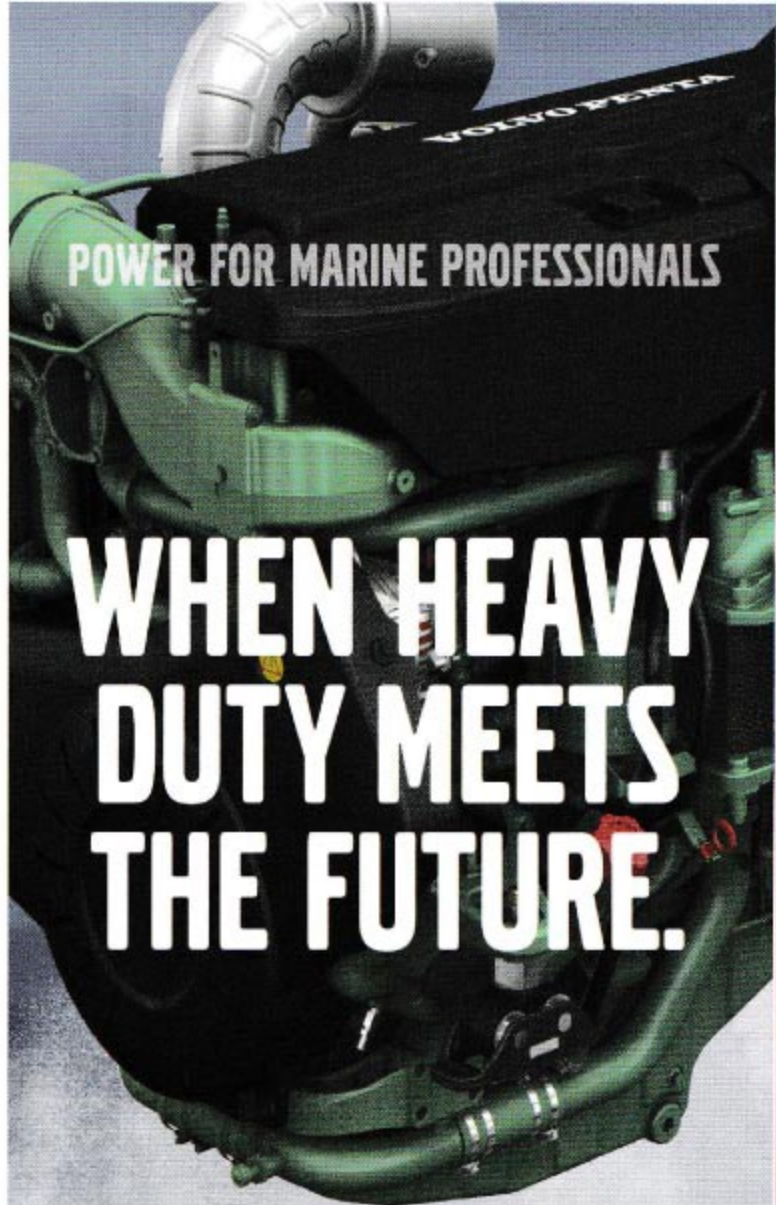


Another tough day in the office

barge can get up and move when required – but more importantly, when fully loaded she has the power to stay out of trouble.

Te Matuku Bay Oysters partner Nat Upchurch said they wanted a strong, no-nonsense barge, one that can take the hard working environment of an oyster farm. Since entering service, Nat said, this new barge *Tionui* has shown she meets his requirements. ■

specs	LOA	11m
	Beam	3.08m
	Draft lightship	100mm
	Draft laden	305mm
	Depth	445mm
	Weight	3,280 kgs including outboard
	Displacement	9,280 kgs laden
	Power	Single 100hp four stroke outboard motor.
	Top speed	15 knots
	Laden speed	10 knots
	Designer	De Villiers Design
	Builder	Commando Boats



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