

Post earthquake  
distribution,  
abundance and  
health indicators in  
kekeno/New  
Zealand fur seal in  
Kaikōura

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# The pre-earthquake picture

- Fur seal numbers were increasing rapidly around Kaikōura.
- Estimate of nearly 600 pups produced at Ōhau Point in 2005.
- Estimate of 2,471 pups produced at Ōhau Point in 2016.
- Exposure to consistently high numbers of tourists.



- Colony growth at Ōhau correlated with increasing road mortality.
- No censusing since the earthquake – where are we now?

# Why is this work needed?

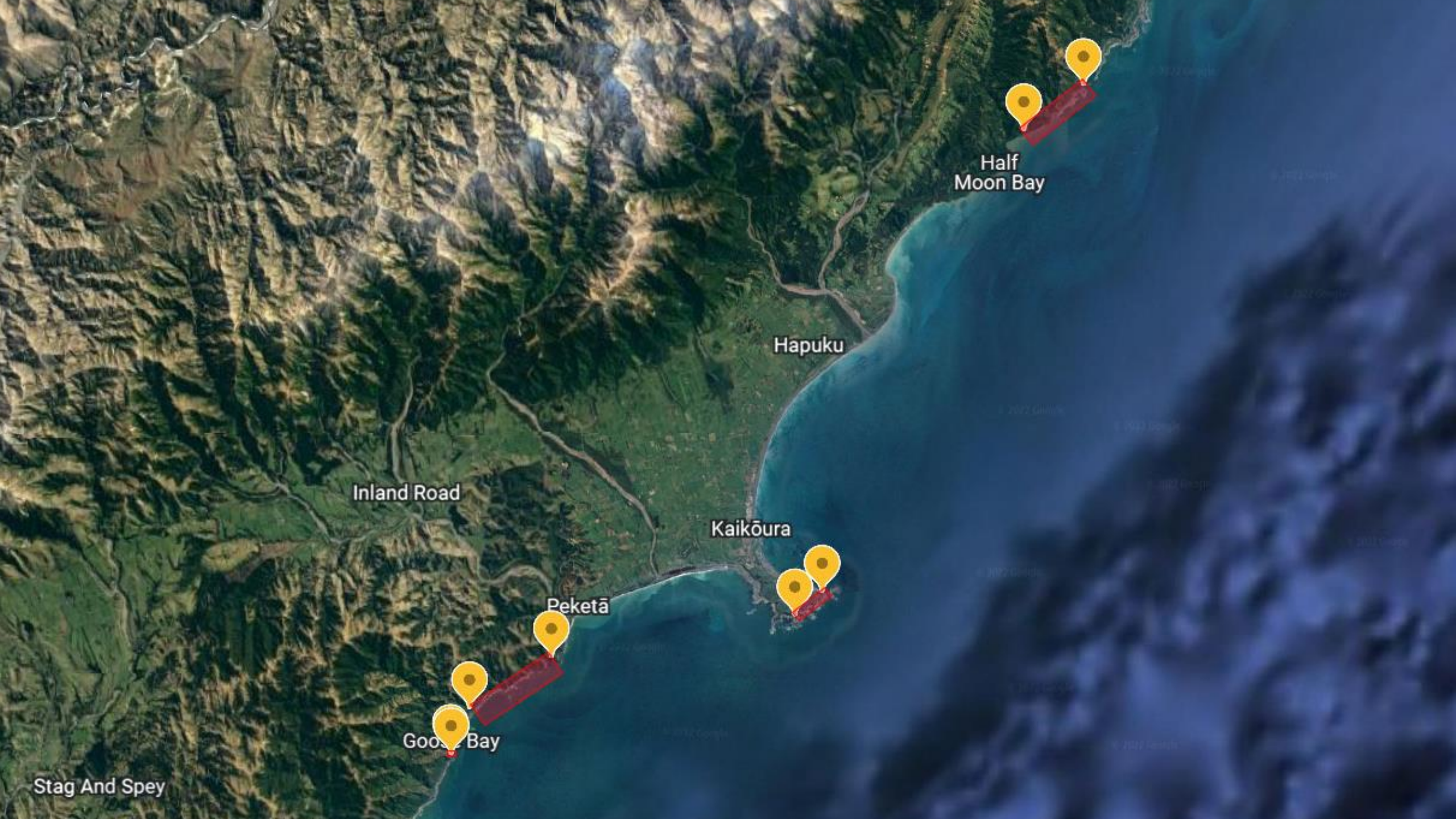
## Management concerns

- No benchmark to measure the suitability of current management strategies.
- Scheduled 2024 review of the Kaikōura Marine Management Area Act (2014) – implications for the Ōhau Point fur seal sanctuary.



## Academic opportunity

- Opportunity to study the effects of a natural disaster on a recolonizing pinniped population.



Half  
Moon Bay

Hapuku

Inland Road

Kaikōura

Peketā

Goose Bay

Stag And Spey

# Methodology

## Distribution, abundance and condition

Direct counts started in November, will provide relative colony sizes + spatial use.

Mark – recapture protocols to estimate annual pup production and population size (February 2023).

During capture, pups will be weighed and measured to assess their body condition.

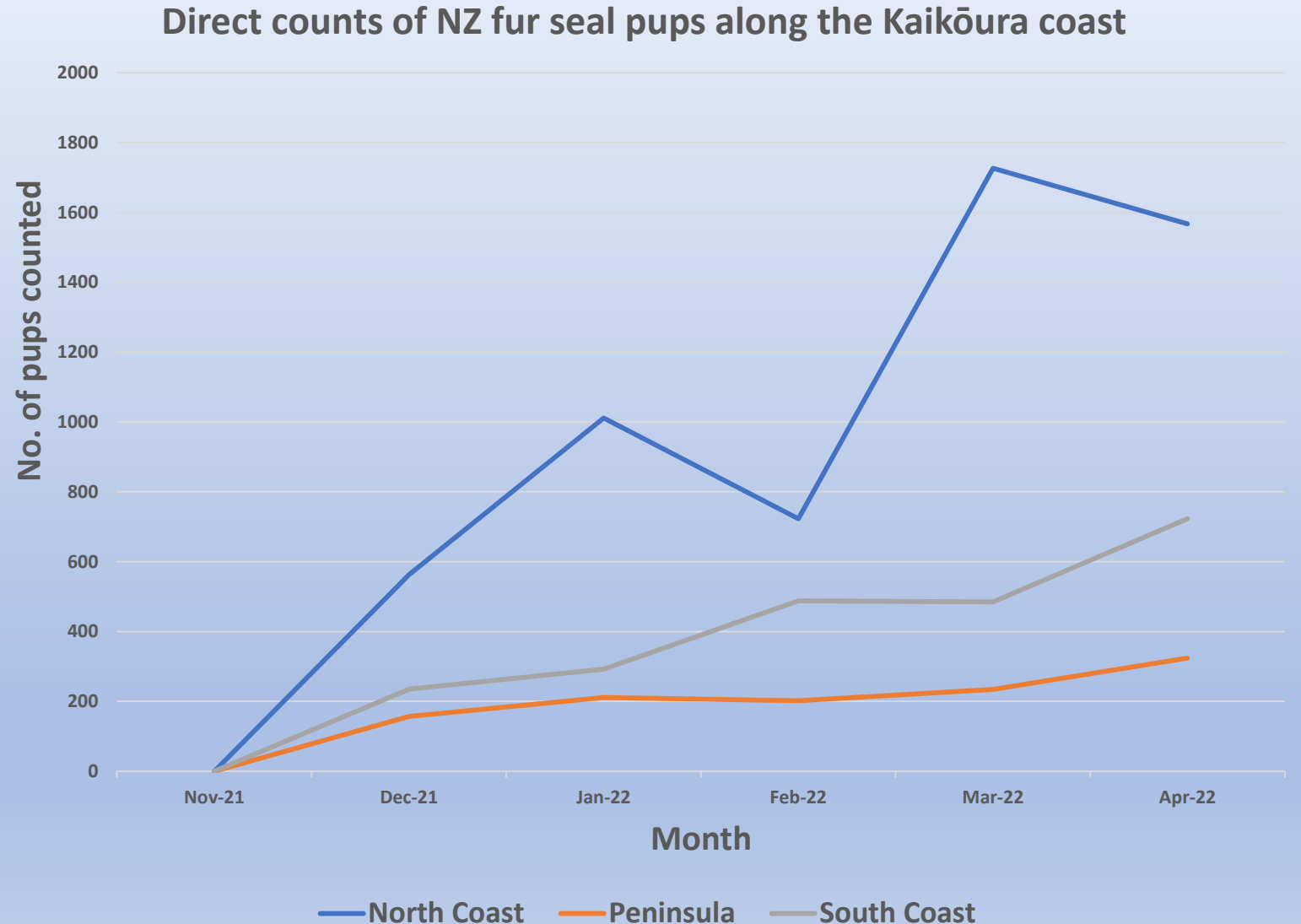


## Habitat mapping

Use of aerial imagery + ground-truthing to assess change in suitable breeding habitat since the earthquake.

# Monthly count data so far

- Monthly pup counts ongoing since Nov 2021.
- In the most recent (April) count, we recorded\*:
  - 1,567 pups on the north coast.
  - 324 pups on the peninsula.
  - 723 pups on the south coast.



\*Raw data.

A young seal pup with dark brown fur and a lighter brown patch on its snout is resting on a large, textured rock. The pup is looking upwards and to the right. The background shows more of the rocky terrain, which appears to be a natural habitat. A semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

## Next steps...

- Continue monthly counts through to February 2023.
- Habitat mapping ground-truthing to take place in winter 2022.
- In-colony work in February 2023.