

# Great Barrier Island, Aotea Marine reserve proposal

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The recent decision in March by Conservation Minister Chris Carter to overturn 12 years of due process, plus numerous legal, Environment Court and High Court decisions in the Whangamata marina application, has astounded all bar the deceitful eco' types who have got to the Minister through his back door.

Last year, the Minister showed for the first time his clear arrogance of public opinion to due process when he announced his intention to create the largest near-shore marine reserve on our coastline at Great Barrier Island. Yes he paid lip service to local concerns, belatedly retaining access to the important shellfish beds at Whangapoua.

He even offered a bribe to the local landowners and longstanding and respected families. Understandably, the Maybey and Rope families were naturally insulted to be offered traditional fishing rights in the proposed marine reserve above the rest of the community, as this was clearly seen as an attempted bribe by the Department of Conservation.

Transport Minister Pete Hodgson then offered his concurrent support in what can only be described as a hasty decision which was too quick for even a cursory consideration of the transport industry's concerns in regards to safety and the undue and adverse effects this proposal extending out to the 12 nautical mile territorial limit will have.

Approximately 47,000 hectares is one hell of a lot of water space. We don't even have this amount in aquaculture production areas nationally. This proposal will effectively remove 70 percent of the fishable rocky shore from the back of the Barrier. No consideration has been given to the effects the displaced fishing effort will have on the other, more sensitive and accessible areas inside the Barrier. Have we not learnt from the lessons of Gisborne and the marine reserve just north on the East Coast?

Fisheries Minister Benson-Pope wisely kicked for touch in the lead up to the elections. Now this responsibility rests with new Fisheries Minister, gentleman Jim Anderton, something many fishers have commented on as being a bit of a worry, as Jim, by his own admission, knows nothing about fishing. For me the jury is still out. Jim Anderton is a senior and respected politician, and as such I would hope that he will take the time and come and talk with all stakeholders and not just the eco' supporters and local Iwi.

In saying this DoC, has failed to identify any risk or threat to local biodiversity that warrants such a proposal. Risk and threats that could not be addressed by any number of management tools, rather than total lock out. DoC has admitted that they have no ability to effect compliance. So the good guys who look after this area will be locked out and the reserve will become a haven for fish thieves. Why?

Aotea is bloody important. I have also just heard that apart from talking further with Maori, the Ministry or the Minister does not intend consulting further in preparation for his concurrence decision. My response immediately was that he needs to remain mindful of two key issues, and it may well be in his best interests to consult further. Specifically, he must take into account the undue and adverse effects on existing stakeholders, including both extractive and passive users. Also, he must disregard DoC's supporting submissions, as there is no legal provision in the Act to take these into account.

Clearly, DoC should have already had its submissions in support prior to notification to warrant even consideration of the proposal. To call for further submissions in support afterwards is in effect double-dipping, and borders on corrupt practices. This practice alone by his staff is setting the Minister up for a judicial review.

Given that he should ignore all the eco's coerced submissions from folk who have little or no knowledge of the Barrier, he should also ignore the many submissions from schoolchildren that these eco' types tend to tap as meaningful and legitimate participants, when most children have little or no understanding of the surrounding cultural, social and economic impacts at stake.

Anyone with half a brain can see that this proposal was ill-conceived and poorly processed right from its inception. Equally, I do not believe Chris Carter likes the bad attention he is currently attracting to his government. I equally recognise that he is on a mission to meet the

government's objective of having 10 percent of our territorial waters under some form of marine protection.

We are told that 7.4 percent of these waters already enjoy some form of marine protection and this does not include existing submarine cable and pipeline protection areas. What adds insult to injury is the fact that the New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council has already offered the Minister the chance to talk about and agree on where they might like to put the remaining three percent to meet the government's objective in its biodiversity strategy.

Contrary to the eco's extremists views, nothing in the government's strategy states that this protection must be no-take marine reserves.

If DoC and the Minister want a marine reserve of this magnitude on our coast, then the sooner he starts talking with the legitimate stakeholders the sooner his life will become easier.

The sad result from all this negative activity is that the good name, image and public support of those dedicated DoC workers who are trying to protect and save our endangered birds and critters in the field is being destroyed by the arrogant attitudes of the DoC policy zealots in head office.

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