

# How to Paint it BLACK

**CHECK out these photos of the Waiwhetu Stream in Lower Hutt. You would have thought someone had painted it black with all the stones, rocks and logs covered in a layer of black slime. However, it is a lot worse than that. This is what happens to a stream when it is being used as an open sewer, as this one has been for the last thirty-five years by the Hutt City Council (HCC).**

The pipe in the stream is their emergency outfall that is used when its contents are not being sent to Pencarrow to destroy that coastline. Then for twelve hours a day chemicals and human diseases, that are contained within the millie screened sewage, sweep up the stream killing everything it touches. This year alone it has been used for a total of four weeks in February and August. There are no colours from the wetland plants in summer anymore as the council wanted them to turn black too.

The impact on marine life in the Wellington Harbour would be massive judging from the loss of marine life at Pencarrow, described in my last story. When the HCC diverts the sewage down the stream they issue public notices warning the public, but as shellfish are filter feeders the chemicals kill them, so where is the Department of Conservation (DOC)? When the stream is turned into a sewer the slick from the chemicals can be seen spreading over the harbour and all along the Petone Beach. At Worsler Bay the surf lifesavers report that the slick from the outfall at the Pencarrow pipe is pushed into the bays around them. Sewage slicks can travel great distances; the Wellington City Council (WCC) sewage slick reaches Sinclair Head.

It was not luck that saw me arrive at this stream to take these photos, as I knew the sewage pipe to Pencarrow had broken again and was shut down for repairs. What is pictured is a normal flow with the chemicals on the surface creating the suds, but under the suds are thousands of fine particles, easily trapped in a bottle. In this country, the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) does not mention the impact of sewage on marine life let alone making it a requirement to strip out the chemicals and human diseases.

Nothing lives in this stream and the weeks of discharge coincided with the first whitebait run, yet DOC says nothing. The pools that once contained eels are now dead, and DOC says nothing. But this is not just happening to this stream, it is happening all around New Zealand to beaches, harbours and rivers and DOC says nothing. Today Gisborne, Napier,

New Plymouth, Auckland and Dunedin dump sewage on their beaches while Palmerston North and Fielding city councils dump their chemicals and sewage into the Manawatu River. In Wellington the product flows into Lyall Bay, down the Waikanae River, and the Karori Stream, which often receives untreated sewage. There are many more yet DOC endorses the resource consents. Do these people turn their heads and quickly look away, to have allowed this to happen every day? It is quite likely the reason why those in Government through DOC, the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Fisheries are proposing marine reserves in the wrong place. Hiding within their department's policy they do not have to face the fact that it is they who are destroying marine life along our coasts with their silence. Imagine what would happen if you did this to a stream or the sea?

The Government would be aware of this open sewer spilling into the stream and harbour so maybe they feel as if there should be no colours in our world so that future generations will never know what a stream, river or beach should look like. A succession of Ministers of the Environment, beginning in 2005, failed to address the cause of the pollution. Marian Hobbs gave the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) \$69,912 to help plan the clean up of the Waiwhetu Stream. Then in March 2006 the next Minister, David Benson Pope, dished out \$28,500 to the GWRC to test a soil decontaminating technique. This gives you an idea of how little the government understands the marine environment, as the purpose for which the money was granted had nothing to do with eliminating the cause of the pollution.

Today there is very little trade waste entering the Waiwhetu Stream as it is piped through a designated network into the treatment station where the chemicals are then pumped onto to our beaches and into streams. It is obvious the HCC and GWRC management are responsible for the pollution in the Waiwhetu Stream and to fool the public they have come up with a zillion dollar plan to replace the stream bed again as they last did in 1979 only for them to dump more chemicals into it and the trickery starts again. It is little wonder they have done nothing to stop this discharge as it keeps their staff diverted from facing up to how they have turned a world they know little about, black.

Throughout NZ councils are allowing inter-tidal zones in streams and rivers to be polluted with industrial or agriculture chemicals and by their actions they continually prove they haven't a clue or a scientist who can describe the value of the inter-tidal zone. The reason for that is simple, it may be true. Government has for years, through the Ministry of Science and Technology, been blocking funding for marine science to prove its value.

When over sixty of our country's top marine scientists and policy advisors, tasked with compiling the NZCPS, failed to include or

recognise the value of the inter-tidal zone it allowed government to devolve its responsibility to ensure regional and local councils managed the marine environment in a sustainable way. As a result councils have turned once productive rivers, streams and inter-tidal areas into black death zones for marine life. It is fitting that black is the colour carried by our national teams as government and councils are doing their best to paint our rivers, streams and beaches black as well. Forget about the clean green image, it is a myth propped up by media captured by green eco groups and dive shops with their lopsided stories and editorials in metropolitan newspapers. When editorials support proposed marine reserves and marine aquariums in the wrong place, with misinformation that contradicts previous full page stories they have carried, it provides us with a perfect example of how they misuse their power and misinform and divide a nation while destroying an environment of which they obviously have no knowledge.

When the last National Government was in power they refused to listen to our concerns or recognise the value that would come from defining the rights of recreational fishers. Today we can look back at their arrogant attitude and see how their disregard for the marine environment has destroyed much of the marine habitat essential for baitfish. For example, in 1997 I warned many of them, including their future Prime Minister, about the damage fast ferries were doing to marine life. In 1999 I tried to get Nick Smith, the then Minister of Conservation, to recognise the value of submarine fresh water springs in the Wellington Harbour, all to no avail. The result of such disregard for the marine environment takes a few years to appear but that government, by allowing fast ferries into the Marlborough Sounds, not only destroyed the fragile coastline but the massive pilchard schools disappeared almost overnight. They allowed the ferries' wakes of twenty seven two-metre waves a day to wash the seaweed off the beaches and destroy the food chain that is scientifically linked to blue cod and dolphins. Now we are down to a bag limit of three blue cod and our native dolphins have lost their food source.

In 1992 we were provided with a perfect example of how marine science funded by government has failed to provide the information that was in front of their noses. Readily accessible on the net, is a scientific paper describing heavy metals in surface sediments of the Waiwhetu Stream, written by four scientists working for the Institute of Environmental Health and Forensic Science Ltd (IEHFSL). The Ministry of Science and Technology through their funding agent the Foundation of Research Science and Technology (FRST) in turn funded them. The paper, Heavy Metals in Surface Sediments of Waiwhetu Stream Lower Hutt, was published in the NZ Journal of Marine and Freshwater Research (NZJMFR) and falls short.

In this paper heavy metals and a little of the history of the Waiwhetu Stream is described, including where they sampled. They were given a perfect opportunity to describe the impact of chemicals in a stream and they clearly hinted that they knew what was wrong, but they failed to put it into writing. Maybe it was another case of not biting the hand that feeds them, for they too had come under the FRST management policy that I experienced when I was helping them with a project called discovering Natural Ecosystems. The \$32 million allocated disappeared into the depths when the green eco lobby concerned with bottom trawling hijacked the programme.





The errors and omissions in the IEHFSL paper are basic and should have been picked up - read it yourself. The NZJMFR peer review system should have identified the errors but as I found out recently they also do not have the people in management capable of recognising the errors, or a major scientific discovery that I made in the inter-tidal zone. After six years of study, many photos in support, and encouragement from the Prime Minister, two Ministers of Conservation and Environment, senior DOC scientists and management and a number of scientists at universities and Te Papa, the discoveries I made were also recognised through resource consents and the Environment Court, yet the NZJMFR management failed to understand the significance of how important the discovery was. The paper we presented to them was co-written by two scientists, leaders in their field, was kept basic for their benefit as it was going to be the first of a number of papers. In rejecting it for publication they have exposed why so little is understood in the marine environment. These people have most likely been blocking the publication of major discoveries for years and have only just been caught out.

The NZJMFR management urgently needs a major overhaul if the marine environment is ever going to attract the young researchers willing to put in the hours required. The country deserves a higher standard from the management of this government body as our discovery could have given a number of young science graduates a starting point for their master theses in related fields.

In December 1999 the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment published a document called *Setting Course for a Sustainable Future: The Management of New Zealand's Marine Environment*. In section 5, page 74, under the heading *Adequacy of Environmental Information*, (5.2) Different kinds of information he had this to say: --

"However, in an information scarce environment like the marine environment, informal information will often be a resource that marine managers cannot afford to neglect or ignore."

They should tell that to the management of the NZJMFR as they are holding back marine science from advancing.

The IEHFSL scientists described, that due to accidental sewage spills and maintenance, raw sewage has been pumped into the Waiwhetu Stream for over twenty years. Yet they failed to test anywhere near the sewage pipe although they did explain that all industrial trade waste had been piped to the HCC Seaview Sewage Treatment Plant since 1978. In another statement they found it odd that the dissolved oxygen and pH levels were decreasing downstream instead of increasing, yet they counted dust particles, as if that was all there was to see.

The scientists half hearted sample methods also failed to record the human diseases that their company specialises in identifying and which comes out of every sewage pipe. They should have picked up the DDT and every other weed and algae killer that was and still is sprayed or released into this stream. Their report also failed to provide the warning to the HCC that the design of the proposed new sewage plant (now four years old) would prove to become the Wellington region's second greatest environmental disaster. When a science paper funded by government contains easily identified corrupted information, peer reviewed by their funding body as well as their scientific journal, the implications are massive when it is

science and not local knowledge that government has been using to select marine reserve sites.

When I was invited to participate in the natural ecosystem programme by FRST they asked us to use the eight nationally important databases in our considerations. I was immediately interested and carried out a number of searches to gauge how accurate they were. It did not take long to discover that of the eight, four had major errors and omissions. For example up to my involvement there was not one national database that named a native inter-tidal wetland plant and they still fail to describe their function.

FRST are the government science funding body responsible for allocating \$400 million a year. Their mismanagement of this funding has had a major influence in preventing the three NIWA, two DOC and one Ministry of Fisheries recognised national important databases from being corrected. Their mismanagement has failed to ensure that those involved in reviewing the NZCPS have the correct scientific information to work from. They have failed to fund scientific research by universities to discover the value of the inter tidal zone instead directing our money to only government science bodies who continue to publish databases full of errors.

NIWA's description of the Cook Strait currents is an example of another faulty database.

The standard of the marine and inter-tidal knowledge available to government is well below what is acceptable and this was proven when DOC, the Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of the Environment failed to respond when two regional councils thought it acceptable for major dairy factories to dump their chemical waste into both the Waikato and Manawatu Rivers. This is going to have massive implications and in time it will be seen as an environmental disaster around the estuaries of these rivers, impacting directly on the food supply of our recreational bag limit and our endangered Maui and Hector dolphins. Overseas research and four events in NZ has identified that such pollution, combined with fertiliser run off from farms in flood conditions, has a direct link to toxic algae blooms proven to cause the death of mammals. No more will my green sea turn a deeper blue. Bad luck Hector you are really dead meat now and those appointed to identify the threats to you, say nothing and prove they have not the marine knowledge to foresee this thing happening to you.

The errors in the databases also ensures regional councils have not the information to ensure that resource consents through the Resource Management Act have adequate provision to manage dairy factory waste. It is not the fault of the river, fish, dolphins, the people who elected the councillors or the councillors and their management to think this is acceptable. It is the government's science funding providers such as FRST and DOC who must take responsibility as they have blocked funding for years. Waste from dairy factories contain chemicals designed to kill algae and as such is bad news to the beginning of the food chain and who knows the impact on those that travel up rivers to spawn as it

only takes a ten percent change in water quality for everything to die. Around these rivers the drop in recreational catches of shellfish, paddle crabs, flounder, grey and yellow eyed mullet, kahawai, spotty shark and snapper will be very noticeable by 2010.

The importance of native wetland plants in a stream may have been handed down to some Maori but there are now many others who have used their time to pursue other interests. It was a very knowledgeable Maori who first described the function of inter-tidal wetland plants in streams to me. I then went out and looked for myself, spending hours taking photos, observing and having access to many scientific papers helped assemble the jigsaw of knowledge I now have.

The first sign of life in the Waiwhetu Stream bed is the Cape Pond weed, which is treated by the GWRC as a noxious weed. This is illogical, as it has not spread down current. There was once a notice describing that this plant would be removed in autumn yet they contracted the local lwi to remove it in spring. Any plant that can grow in a stream full of chemicals should be respected as they take the toxins out to sea in the next flood.

The photos taken of its banks show the difference today from those taken in 2001. The raupo roots have gone from stumps to holes in the bank and the plates of paper around the illogical plants have almost disappeared, along with the plants. The plants served no purpose other than proving that those managing the environment division of the GWRC were meddling in an environment they had no knowledge of, a common sight throughout NZ. In 2001 the GWRC brought a group together to plant out the Waiwhetu Stream comprising people from Industrial Research (formally DSIR), Forest and Bird, WWF and the Wellington Botanical Society. With no marine knowledge or a database describing wetland plants they made a feeble attempt and this is described with photos.

Industrial Research situated along the banks prove they have no clue as they replaced the native wetland plants with exotic grasses down to the water's edge, just as the Whitanga council has done. Both could do no better now than erect crosses in the streams they manage. There are no colours anymore as if they wanted the streams to turn black. People who plant grass along stream banks are killing inter tidal life as explained in the DOC research piece published in NZ Fishing C2C Vol 26 page 66.

Maybe they are no different to the GWRC and HCC and believe that if they fade away from their involvement people will forget who was responsible for this environmental madness and not have to face the facts. After all its not easy facing up when your whole world is black.

