



By Jim Mikoz

SOMEONE in Government has a wickedly warped sense of humour to have Deputy Prime Minister Jim Anderson, who is also the Minister of Fisheries, announce the name of the recently approved marine reserve on Wellington's south coast as the *Kupe and Kevin Smith Marine Reserve*.

Some years ago, at a public meeting organised by the Wellington Recreational Marine Fishers Association, a representative of Forest and Bird was asked to describe their proposal to DOC for a marine reserve on Wellington's South Coast. The meeting attracted over two hundred people and a number of them raised concerns about the extremely dangerous waters around Sinclair Head that recreational fishers would be forced into if such a marine reserve was approved for the proposed location. A number of times Forest and Bird's representative told everyone that the marine reserve was more important than human lives and if recreational fishers went into the area that would be their worry. Those members of the public present explained that the conditions can change in seconds and the wind change forecasts are seldom reliable for the Wellington south coast, but the concerns fell on deaf ears.

The position of such a marine reserve is a perfect example of what happens when we fail to introduce university level degrees in marine management. Instead Government surrounds itself with policy advisors whose knowledge is based on land management. I have yet to find one with even a basic understanding of the marine environment which suits this Government just fine.

They have used the Marine Reserves Act as a political football to attract the green voters who, without marine knowledge, are also pushed into supporting whatever their leaders consider is the flavour of the month.

The history behind the reserve proposed for the Wellington south coast area goes back a long way and was the dream of a DOC seal scientist who exhibited an open dislike for recreational fishers. He suggested the location of the reserve, out of frustration, when the farmer banned him from crossing his bridges to the seals at Cape Turakia. The DOC scientist claimed them as Government owned bridges. His inappropriate manner caused the situation to get right out of hand and resulted in barbed wire fences being erected along the entire Wainuomata coastal road, including the river's swimming holes that had vehicle access. Vehicle numbers dropped from 2000 a weekend to 50 and a lawless environment ensured that fishing at night was impossible. DOC senior management gave him another opportunity to show his dislike of recreational fishers when they appointed him to review the reserve submissions.

Years later I accepted an invitation to participate on the DOC NGO meetings and represent recreational marine fishers, partly to discover who these cold blooded people were who had placed no value on human lives. I quickly found they had the best man management skills I had come across and knew a lot about trees, birds, fresh water life, stoats and opossums but I could not find anyone who had any practical knowledge of the marine environment. Today DOC policies mismanage the land run off and it is impacting on the dolphins' food source.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, in a publication called *Growing for Good*, states that 'New Zealand loses between 200 and 300 million tonnes of soil to the oceans every year' (Ministry for the Environment report, 1997). He further stated that 'this is about 10 times faster than the rest of the world, and accounts for between



ABOVE: A serious ling caught aboard the Mikoz boat. The best fishing for them should be just down current from the generator blades when they are installed...

1.1 and 1.7 percent of the world's total soil loss to the oceans, despite a land area of only 0.1 percent of the world's total' (section 3.4.2 'Soil' p.50).

To halt the extinction of the Hector dolphin species Mfish produced an Initial Position Paper which proved they have serious errors in their database and marine knowledge. This explains why they have an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff management system. The Ministry of the Environment proved this when they identified that we have forty species at or below sustainable levels. With both DOC and Mfish producing serious misinformation, it allows councils to destroy the habitat of the dolphins' food source and unless corrected immediately their policies will ensure that Hector dolphins numbers have no hope of recovering.

While being briefed on DOC's involvement in a Marine Environment Classification programme I asked where they were obtaining the information on the Cook Strait currents from. Their reply described the reason for their lack of concern for human lives. As a Government department they are required to seek advice from the Government's marine advisors and are required to treat the (mis)information provided to them by LINZ and NIWA as fact.

It was in 1999 that I first identified major errors and omissions on the LINZ marine charts while researching a GWRC project to fill in submarine fresh water springs with mud and shingle. I asked LINZ to mark the springs on the charts, only to be told that charts should only be used for navigation purposes. I did not accept this as the errors have been presented as part of resource consent applications and hearings. Their errors not only threaten the region's artesian water

marine management



ABOVE: A ling popping to the surface uncontrolled due to the current...

supply but will also cost the Wellington Port Company millions of dollars.

Since the NZ Navy produced the first marine charts, LINZ has used their misinformation which uses the speed of seabed currents to describe surface currents on their marine charts. Anyone who has been diving will know the seabed currents have little to do with surface currents and at times they can be going in the opposite direction. In my story When marine science gets it wrong, I described the height of Ash Rock as being almost two metres above the height specified on the LINZ marine charts. Recently, when I purchased a Garmin 172c with the 2007 charts, I found Ash Rock to be 92 metres from where LINZ plotted it. Two metres off the rock I recorded a mark of S41 14.626 E174 38.055, check the error on your GPS charts.

Others have confirmed that the error is between 90 to 150 metres, while land detail is accurate. This is hardly surprising as the last survey was done in 1948 before the GPS was invented. But there can be no excuse from LINZ for describing sea bed currents as surface currents to Government. With such massive errors from LINZ and NIWA they have directly become responsible for Government creating a marine reserve that will become known alternatively as the Cave Creek Marine Reserve. The group in the most danger are the divers who will be diving past Sinclair Head as they will not be aware that the LINZ marine charts do not correctly describe the currents.

The NZ court system has also been subjected to the LINZ misinformation in a recent court case brought against a commercial fisher accused of having a cray pot float inside the Cook Strait power cable protection zone. With rocks 90 to 150 metres from where the marine charts describe them to be, defining accurately on charts, just where the shoreline is becomes critical.

LINZ have also made errors on the Cape Colville charts by describing a current as 2 to 3 knots when it is actually 9 knots and includes errors describing the position of rocks. The misinformation on the currents through the Cook Strait is further compounded by

NIWA who have produced a computer designed description of currents, as if the currents are predictable. Air pressure and wind has the greatest influence on the Cook Strait currents. These are not predictable. Providing internationally recognised chart makers with misinformation seriously questions the accuracy of every marine chart produced by this Government body.

Those who travel across the Strait see the currents at work but it can be a life threatening experience for those in smaller boats. It is not a pleasant experience to be lifted three or four metres into the air to find the water has disappeared from under you. Off Cape Terawhiti the Fastcat fast ferry experienced a sixteen metre peaking and collapsing wave and free fell pushing in its side two metres. After temporary repairs here in New Zealand it went to Australia for a side rebuild.

The LINZ marine charts also state the maximum speed of the current at Cape Terawhiti is 5.25 knots while their Almanac states 7 knots. Other information suggests that, in a storm, currents exceed 15 knots. Other errors on the LINZ marine charts are obvious as it would be impossible for a current of 0.2 knots, described for Lyall Bay, to shift the forty to eighty tonne boulders from the Wellington Airport runway extension to Island Bay. The frigate breaking into a million bits and scattering through the marine reserve not only made a mockery of the Government's understanding of the Marine Reserve Act, but proved the information LINZ have produced is hopelessly inaccurate.

About every seven years the current sweeping along the Nicolson Trench reaches such a velocity that ling are unable to equalise their swim bladder and hundreds pop to the surface, just as the ling in the photo is doing. For years I have used the whirlpools and surface disturbance to help me find reefs as even in 200 metres of water the disturbance can be impressive. We have at times fished off Ohau Point when an up-welling has suddenly appeared and for about a hundred metres around us the sea has been lifted about a half metre higher than the surrounding sea. Commercial fishers often experience three big Dan buoys disappearing on their long lines from currents far exceeding the currents predicted by LINZ.

The similarities between the tragedy at Cave Creek and the Government proposed marine reserve off the Wellington South Coast are so close they are scary. Just as DOC management were out of their depth when they endorsed the plans for a viewing platform to be built with nails, they also made an error in not accepting practical marine knowledge with this marine reserve. Instead they accepted the misinformation from a 1948 survey and a computer simulation of the Cook Strait currents.

Sure there is not a chance of anyone of us being out in a storm, but after a storm the returning surface water comes through at in-

credible speed. It is all very well for the uninformed to say you should not go there around the spring tides but the Cook Strait is not like any other water as sometimes on a full moon there is no current while on a quarter moon the current can be extremely strong.

Anchoring to the west past Sinclair Head can be an experience to do without as the increase in the current speed catches a few out. There have been instances when boaties have had to cut the anchor rope as the bow of their boat was pulled underwater.

There has been an increase in the numbers of kayakers travelling around the coast and we came across four of them who were most upset after being caught at Cape Terawhiti with three metre peaking and collapsing pressure waves. With Government providing misinformation on marine charts it is only a matter of time before a group of these people die in a single incident.

Obviously Government science providers have deceived Government into believing the current on the south coast is less than 7 knots. With Government falling over backwards to gain the green vote in the next election, if they do not snap out of it, we will shortly see the biggest environmental disaster of our lifetime.

When Energy Minister David Cunliffe announced that eight million dollars will be spent to promote the installation of current generators 40 metres below the surface waters of the Cook Strait, we were given another example showing that Government has not a clue about the marine environment. It doesn't take too many smarts to see what will happen. The proposal has 2000 generators with 40 metre diameter blades with the first to be installed by 2008.

In this area we have the Cook Strait power cables and a cable protection boat stationed 24/7 so that a trawler does not bounce a net over them, or a recreational fisher drag a sinker over them. Yet Government wants to surround these cables in 2000 flying blades held on the shingle bottom by anchors, chains and wire strops.

Destroying the power cables will cause a major reduction in our power supplies that will render your computer and credit card useless and cause a major economic collapse on a scale that would be hard to imagine. The impact on our way of life will be changed forever.

If any are installed it would not be long before the result of this Government's mismanagement of pine forest harvesting takes effect.

After every major flood most of the pine trees' wastes that are left in the flood plain gets carried out to sea. Off Makara we often see pine logs and trees, some with only few branches above the surface, bobbing along only to disappear when they reach the rip off Ohau Point. The generator structures will look like a farmers fence after a flood as they collect pines that will stack up just as they do to create log dams in rivers before bursting, causing the massive floods and equally mas-

Continued next page...

They call this marine management...

damage to properties near the river mouths. It should only take a year, or may even happen while under construction, before enough pines collect to add extra weight to break the whole lot free. Then, as the structure gets carried down current, smashing into a few more on its way, it will eventually come in contact with the power cables and then end up in the trench where the hoki trawlers work causing untold damage to their nets.

Still, marine and energy science think they know everything about the Cook Strait and with Government falling over backwards to gain the green vote in the next election, they are accepting of whatever this lobby group mutters about sustainable power, wind turbines, current generators, protecting rivers from dams and where to put marine reserves.

Not only will this area be another no fishing zone but the turbines will make life hell for the dolphins and the whales as they travel on their traditional migration through the area. Down current it will be like a supermarket deli for crayfish, barracuda, blind eels and sharks as slices and bits of dolphins and whales are delivered, cut up, as the mammals run the gauntlet of 2000 forty-metre blades. With those involved promoting generators at the entrance to Manukau, Kaipara and Hokianga

harbours it will make the netting ban a joke in comparison to the out-of-sight out-of-mind underwater death Government has dreamed up for endangered mammals and their food source.

I would have thought the power cables had received enough damage by being placed in the fastest currents in NZ. Video footage shows boulders bouncing off the cables as the current changes direction. Today, eight resource consent decisions have now been corrupted by the LINZ and NIWA misinformation describing the Cook Strait, so it is little wonder a marine reserve was going to be sited in the wrong place.

I described where it should have been in a previous NZ Fishing Coast to Coast story Lock the gate... Government poisoning of marine life in progress but that area would not have suited this Government. The Minister of Conservation, Chris Carter, has just signed off consent to poison fifteen miles of coastline to the east of the reserve with trade waste and other chemicals for twenty five years. They are discharging onto a beach from the Hutt City Council's poorly designed sewage treatment plant. You have to ask why a Government Minister, who has just signed off a marine reserve has given authority to such environmental vandalism. His decision will also destroy the life accessing the two lakes of which his department has just gained management.

The Government is also in breach of the Marine Reserves Act as the outer boundaries remain inside the white sector of the Pencarrow Light house, an internationally recognised shipping route. Who knows where the Government thinks the boundaries are as LINZ marine charts are 90 to 150 metres out. Buoys will make the reserve boundaries a joke as the Picton Ferries ran over the pots of commercial fishers until they put one out of business.

Shipping travels within the boundaries of the reserve and the intimidation of recreational fishers has been common place for years with our written concerns repeatedly dismissed and condemned by the Maritime Safety Authority (MSA). It was not until one of the ferries ran over a boat and killed the skipper, a master of another was sprung taking on a tanker, and another almost ran aground while chatting up the passengers, that MSA finally did what they should have done in 1995 when the fast ferry almost killed those in a fishing

competition at the Falcon Shoals.

If divers think they will still be able to get a feed of paua around the coast they may be in for a shock, as not only will the wind turbines dump dirt into the sea contaminating the western coastline, but the Ministry of Fisheries are helping commercial paua divers to take out the paua stocks that have been closed to them for years. Fishing pressure will also be shifted into areas that traditionally hold juvenile blue cod and tarakihi with the obvious consequences. The impact will be further compounded if the surf reef is built in Lyall Bay as shingle bags will eventually burst destroying a major blue cod and red gurnard spawning area.

The headless chicken management of the south coast marine environment does not end there. The Wellington City Council sewage is being dumped 900 metres away from a plant that has major design faults, as they add thirty eight thousand litres of a class eight caustic every week and when it rains the caustic is trebled. The quantity of fresh water being discharged is equivalent to four of the biggest truck and trailer fuel tankers dumping their load every six minutes. Already school boys have discovered that nothing lives in the rock pools as the chemicals contained in the surface's fresh water kills the algae. Seaweed does not live in fresh water and the loss of quality seaweed along this coast is serious as it provides the beginning of the food web to dolphins.

Another project will see an aquarium sucking up the plankton life just before they would have travelled into the reserve, but not on the scale of the fast ferry that Government allowed through the proposed reserve sucking up the equivalent of the surface waters of the entire reserve, a metre deep inside six days.

We have reached an interesting point in time. One minute Government has been dismissing our concerns about the Cook Strait currents and the next, there is enough to drive current generators. This means that if Government already knows how fast the Cook Strait currents are then they have been selectively using marine science to suit themselves and to promote whatever is the flavour of the month to suit the green voters. The costs will be far reaching. Not only will this Government be responsible for the human lives lost and the marine environment destroyed but our whole way of living could be lost as well.



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