

RUSSELL PROTECTION SOCIETY (INC)

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Re: Proposal to renew s186A closure for Maunganui Bay (Deep Water Cove)

The Russell Protection Society wishes to write in support of a proposal by Ngati Kuta and Patukeha Hapu for a further closure of Maunganui Bay to all forms of fishing under s186A of the Fisheries Act 1996 for another two years. It is our submission that the proposal satisfies all the requirements of s186A, as will be outlined below.

The Hapu who propose this closure are tangata whenua for the area and have mana whenua/mana moana over the whole of the Cape Brett Peninsula and surrounding waters. The isolated community of Te Rawhiti and Haui, where the hapu live and where 92% are unemployed, is heavily dependent upon the customary kaimoana resources of the area for their subsistence living. Many people in the community are ahi ka and have served as traditional kaitiaki over this kaimoana for many years.

In more recent times, tangata whenua have been concerned about the state of their resources and have been actively exploring available protection mechanisms. This has included placing a Nga Whenua Rahui over their lands and preparing proposals for a Taiapure and later a Mataitai over those parts of their rohe which contain important kaimoana resources.

Tangata whenua at Te Rawhiti have held dozens of hui to discuss this issue and to try to identify appropriate responses that are consistent with their tikanga. The persistent theme that has arisen out of these meetings is that the use of rahui or closures is most consistent with the customary practices used by their tupuna when seeking to safeguard their precious kaimoana resources.

While it has often been difficult for the Hapu to understand the new constructs of "Taiapure" and "Mataitai Reserves", there has been no hesitation on their part in relating to the use of rahui in order to address the serious problem of ensuring that

adequate kaimoana is available to a community that is heavily dependent upon it. It is their knowledge and belief that rahui has been very successful in the past as a management tool and that it has previously played an important role in sustainably managing Maunganui Bay.

Maunganui Bay is a popular fishing spot because it is sheltered and is brushed by the East Auckland current, resulting in a rich diversity of marine life being found there. For this reason, customary, recreational and, at certain times of the year, commercial fishers compete with one another to harvest popular finfish and shellfish species. The kaitiaki of Ngati Kuta and Patukeha, who fish at Maunganui regularly, noticed a steady decline in the size and availability of fish from the Bay. This was particularly noticeable during the holiday season when thousands of recreational boat owners flock to the Bay of Islands, often seeking shelter in Deep Water Cove from the boisterous winds in order to anchor and line fish or dive.

There have been several studies undertaken by the Offshore Island Research Group, DOC and NIWA that look at the diversity of marine life found at Maunganui Bay. However, it is the kaitiaki of Ngati Kuta and Patukeha who have the best first-hand knowledge of the availability of kaimoana resources there and it is this customary knowledge that is most able to inform any s186A consideration. It is reasonable to assume that if intense harvesting pressure is removed from the Bay, then local stocks of rock lobster, scallops and reef fish will recover in both number and size. In a similar fashion, more mobile fish species *within* the Bay will also increase on a *real-time* basis because temporal localised depletions would thus be eliminated. However, the initial closure period of two years was insufficient time for fish life within the Bay to fully recover and a further closure will be necessary in order to achieve the stated aim of restoring a healthy local fishery at Maunganui so that other, more permanent, management systems can then be employed.

A further two-year closure would provide the opportunity for tangata whenua to consider longer-term customary fishing measures that could fine tune management in a way that provides for a resumption of fishing on a more sustainable basis. It is also considered that Mfish should properly monitor the closure so that any changes in the availability of fish can be documented.

In summary, the kaitiaki of Ngati Kuta and Patukeha, who have a depth of knowledge and experience, are concerned about the availability and size of fish available to tangata whenua living at Rawhiti/Hauī, who are traditionally dependent upon fish from Maunganui Bay for their sustenance. Tangata whenua have held many hui to discuss this matter and have identified rahui as the customary fishing practice that has been used by their tupuna and that will best serve the needs of current generations. The Minister of Fisheries can be satisfied that the previous level of fishing at Deep Water Cove was having an adverse effect on the use and management practices of tangata whenua and that implementing a further s186 closure will serve to improve the availability and size of fish for that community.

For the above reasons, it is submitted that the proposal to close Maunganui Bay to fishing for a further two years meets the requirements of ss(2)(a)&(b) and (3) of s186A of the Fisheries Act 1996.

Regards

Bob Drey
Chairperson