

Community Co-management Proposal for Taranaki Coastline

Further to the recent Rahui and Section 186a Application by Taranaki Iwi to close a large section of Taranaki Coastline from Rawa Stream in the South to Herekawe Stream in the north for two years.

The proposed closure is to stop the take of 'all species of Echinoderms Molluscs and Crustacea at any stage of their life history, whether living or dead. This includes, but is not limited to, rock lobster (crayfish), all crabs, octopus, pāua, kina and pupu (catseye)' from the Hightide line, out to 2 nm (3.7 km).

Following discussion between Taranaki Fishing Clubs and Kaumatua from Taranaki Iwi, the closure proposal is generally supported, though conversation regarding the suitable distance from shore, and therefore depth, to achieve the objectives of the intended closure has been a topic of discussion.

This relates to Crayfish, as the main issue related to Crayfish appears to be localised depletion and conflict between non-commercial and commercial fishers in certain areas.

If the closure extends to 2 nm (3.7 km), then due to water depth effectively all Crayfish take will cease in the area, meaning that fishing effort for Crayfish will shift to the north and south of the Closure area, despite there being anecdotal evidence of crayfish at greater depths.

Acknowledging that a Closure is required, and that any distance from shore needs to relate to all species in the Rahui, a point for consideration is to allow for a 1 nm distance (generally 20-22 m deep water) therefore providing for Closure of the near shore reefs, and also allowing some fishing along the whole Taranaki Coastline, not just north or south of the Closure area for the next 2 years.

At 20-22 m depth, very few, if any, recreational free divers (non-scuba) could dive that deep, meaning that paua are practically out of reach using a distance of 1 nm (Scuba is not allowed to be used to take Paua).

Long term management

The Community supporting the concept of the Closure are also focused on the future management of the Taranaki Coastline following any Closure period – this is where the real work begins.

Going forward, co-management of the nearshore fishery by the Community is worthy of consideration. Recently, and as an outcome of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park process 'Revitalising the Gulf' and the 'Seachange Plan', there is a proposal from Ngati Hei of Mercury Bay / Coromandel to the Crown for 'Ahu Moana', which is described as:

- Co-management of areas covering the coastline to provide for joint mana whenua and community co-management of local marine areas.
- Together it is caring for marine areas through co-management by mana whenua and local communities

Such an approach intends to restore local abundance and revitalise the mauri of the near shore zone, special rules for recreational and customary harvest would be established.

The recent Ngati Hei Ahu Moana proposal has a steering Committee that includes mana whenua, recreational fishers, divers and spearfishers and environmental concerns. This

committee would be supported by subject matter experts from the likes of NIWA, MPI or DOC etc.

In the Taranaki Context, we could adopt such an approach – and through ongoing discussion establish the best composition of the Steering Committee.

Such a management approach could include:

- Management of specific species as required
- Spatial management of key areas through Rahui or reduced take – rather than a blanket closure
- Provision of areas that provide for Non-Commercial and Commercial interests
- Seasonal management based on availability or sensitivity of key species

This would allow for:

- Adaptive management over time
- Restoration of stocks and the environment
- Local monitoring surveys of species
- Education including through schools and the wider community
- Enforcement
- Resourcing – volunteer and paid resources

Such an approach is only possible through all parties coming to the Table, with the best interests of our environment and future generations at heart.

The Section 186a Closure was one of the few, if not only, tools open to Taranaki Iwi to force the hand of the wider community to sit up and take notice of the issues at hand, while upholding their duty as mana whenua and mana moana to protect and enhance the lands, waters and marine resources for future generations to come.

If the S186a Closure is approved by the Crown, there is a time window to put a management approach like Ahu Moana in place. We can all use the opportunity that Taranaki Iwi's application has created – an opportunity to manage for future generations. Such an approach could be the starting point for wider management of the Taranaki Coastline.

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