

# NEW ZEALAND MARINE SCIENCES SOCIETY

TE HUNGA MĀTAI MOANA O AOTEAROA



Tuesday, 11 June 2012.

Hon. Kate Wilkinson  
Minister of Conservation  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington.  
Email: [k.wilkinson@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:k.wilkinson@ministers.govt.nz)

Dear Minister

## Akaroa Harbour Marine Reserve Application

I am writing to you on behalf of the New Zealand Marine Sciences Society (NZMSS), a professional society of New Zealand's marine scientists, affiliated to the Royal Society of New Zealand.

The NZMSS has written to you previously concerning the scientific and educational benefits of the proposed marine reserve at Dan Rogers, Akaroa Harbour and to reinforce our support for the proposal (refer to the appended copy of our letter).

In light of the recent judgement in the High Court, Akaroa Marine Protection Society Incorporated v The Minister of Conservation, dated 8 May 2012, it is our understanding that the assessment under s 5(6)(d) must be reconsidered.

Accordingly, the NZMSS requests that you take the matters raised in the attached letter into account when you consider the application for a marine reserve at Dan Rogers, in the Akaroa Harbour.

We hope that there are no further delays to a decision being made about this proposed reserve as much time has passed since the application was first lodged. The NZMSS respectfully asks what the next steps in the process are together with their timeframes.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Colin McLay.

Colin McLay  
President  
New Zealand Marine Sciences Society, and  
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Cc Rt Hon. John Key, Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism  
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Cc Hon. Steven Joyce, Minister for Science and Innovation.  
Email: [s.joyce@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:s.joyce@ministers.govt.nz)

Encl.



## HUNGA MATAI MOANA

Tuesday, 5 October 2010.

Hon. Kate Wilkinson  
Minister of Conservation  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington.

Dear Minister

### Akaroa Harbour Marine Reserve Application

I am writing to you on behalf of the New Zealand Marine Sciences Society (NZMSS), a professional society of New Zealand's marine scientists, affiliated to the Royal Society of New Zealand.

The aims of the society include encouraging and assisting marine research in New Zealand, and the provision of advice on management of marine resources. The Society has more than 260 scientists, managers, policy makers, and students working in all aspects of marine science in New Zealand and overseas. Every year we hold a conference which provides opportunities for members to present their latest research findings and to network. Our members, therefore, have a wide range of views and experiences on most issues confronting the management of New Zealand's marine environment.

In 1995, our Society gave its support for a marine reserve in the vicinity of Dan Rogers, in the Akaroa Harbour, noting that the reserve "*would be of significant scientific benefit*".

The NZMSS is very concerned to learn of your recent decision to decline the application for a marine reserve at Dan Rogers in Akaroa Harbour. We understand that you declined the application on the grounds of undue interference to recreational use in the area of the proposed marine reserve and that your decision was based on the impact the reserve would have on recreational fishing.

The Society has obtained a copy of your letter to the applicant in which you stated your reasons for upholding the recreational fishing objections. We note in the letter that matters raised in the submissions relating to the benefits which may accrue to the reserve through increasing knowledge and understanding of the marine environment were considered under section 5(6) (e) of the Marine Reserves Act relating to the public interest. You concluded that those benefits outweighed the objections under the public interest criterion. However, you did not take those

benefits into account when you considered the recreational fishing objections under section 5(6) (d). The Society considers that the wider public interest, including the benefits that the proposed reserve would have on enhancing knowledge and understanding of the marine environment in the area, more than outweigh the matters raised in the recreational fishing objections.

Since 1996 when the application for the marine reserve was lodged, the harbour has experienced an increasing number of visitors and associated impacts on its resources. Today, there are even more reasons to justify a marine reserve in the Dan Rogers area from a science perspective. With the establishment of the taiapure over much of the Akaroa Harbour in 2006 and the increase in recreational fishing in the harbour, there is more than ever before an urgent need to set aside an area that allows marine life in its natural habitat to recover and flourish. Specific science and educational benefits that could be expected as a result of the marine reserve being established include:

#### A scientific reference site for the taiapure

The Akaroa Harbour Taiapure almost entirely surrounds the area of the proposed marine reserve (with the exception of the southern boundary). The location of the proposed reserve provides excellent opportunities to study the marine habitats and species in the unfished marine reserve and compare these with the taiapure. The results would help inform management effectiveness of the taiapure.

Locals have observed that recreational fishing has increased substantially over the past 10 – 15 years. The taiapure management committee recommended a reduction in bag limits for a range of popularly fished species in response to the increased fishing pressure. It was noted in the regulatory impact statement to the Minister of Fisheries (dated 1 October 2009) that there was a lack of scientific information to inform the setting of reduced bag limits. A marine reserve located adjacent to the taiapure will provide important baseline information to assist the taiapure management committee with understanding whether the fish and shellfish populations in the remaining harbour area continue to be impacted by harvesting pressure.

The proposed reserve provides significant potential for monitoring the long-term impacts of recreational fishing on marine communities in the harbour by acting as a scientific reference site.

#### A focus for research by universities and other educational institutions

Because human disturbance is minimised in marine reserves (i.e. fishing, dumping, mining and pollution are prevented), scientific research can be undertaken in near-natural situations.

The long established Cape Rodney – Okakari Point Marine Reserve at Leigh, north of Auckland has enabled researchers to address a wide range of science questions about coastal marine ecosystems, habitats and species' populations in a near-natural state. The more recently established Taputeranga Marine Reserve on the Wellington south coast is already the focus of marine ecological research by Victoria University of Wellington. Much of our current understanding about the recovery of harvested species in New Zealand, such as rock lobster, snapper and blue cod, and the impacts of harvesting pressure effecting local changes to coastal habitats, has come from research studies conducted in many of our marine reserves. The research results have in turn been used to inform

the public. For example, many of the marine reserves have interpretive information on site and a children's education programme which focuses on some of our marine reserves – “Experiencing marine reserves” provides children with opportunities to observe and understand natural marine ecosystems by taking them snorkelling in marine reserves.

The proposed Akaroa Harbour Marine Reserve would provide researchers from Canterbury University in Christchurch with a range of investigative opportunities which are currently not available because the entire harbour is used and impacted in some way.

#### A focus for understanding South Island east coast marine ecosystems

The site of the proposed reserve contains a number of scientifically interesting features, such as; semi-protected subtidal harbour assemblages characterised by stands of the giant kelp, *Macrocystis*, cobble faunas and open exposed rocky reef habitats. The subtidal habitats at the entrance to the Harbour have been described as “stunning” and it has been noted that there are a number of undescribed species in the area of the proposed reserve (Dr Chris Battershill, *pers. comm.*).

The proposed marine reserve will contribute to enhancing knowledge and understanding of marine ecosystems in a South Island east coast setting. For example, a marine reserve would provide the potential to better understand the functional linkages between species and the impact of human-induced changes on the local marine environment, its habitats and species because many of the impacts, in particular fishing, have been removed.

#### A focus for Maori cultural research

The proposed reserve would provide ideal opportunities for cultural research of mahinga kai. Maori have an enduring relationship with the marine environment of Akaroa Harbour and the juxtaposition of a marine reserve adjacent to the taiapure would provide an ideal setting for Maori to conduct investigations into the cultural health of the coastal marine area. For example, a cultural coastal health index has been developed recently for Te Taitokerau iwi (funded by MfE's Sustainable Management Fund).

#### Biogeographic regional representation

The proposed reserve is located within the “East Coast South Island” Biogeographic region. Pohatu Marine Reserve, although nearby, is representative of the Banks Peninsula exposed coast while the proposed Akaroa marine reserve is representative of the outer Akaroa Harbour.

There are no other MPAs offering full no-take protection within this large biogeographic region which extends the length of the South Island's eastern coast from Cape Campbell to Timaru.

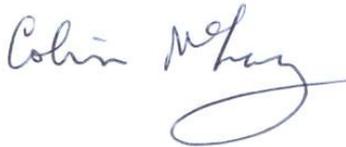
The proposed Akaroa Harbour Marine Reserve is just 12% of the area of the entire Akaroa Harbour. At 530 ha it is similar in size to the Cape Rodney – Okakari Point Marine Reserve at Leigh (approx. 547 ha). The Society considers that the success of that reserve in terms of advancing understanding about the coastal marine environment in northern New Zealand temperate waters is testament to the potential that exists for the Akaroa Harbour proposed reserve.

The Society urges you to reconsider your decision in respect of the recreational fishing objections made against the proposed marine reserve. Given that fish catches are now only a pale shadow of what they were, if ever an area needed protection, that place is Akaroa Harbour! We believe the proposal presents an excellent opportunity for science and education both regionally and nationally, which should not be lost. We ask that you take the matters raised in this letter relating to the science and educational benefits of the proposed reserve as relevant to the wider public interest.

Please consider this letter as reinforcing the Society's continued support for the proposed marine reserve. We would be very pleased to discuss the matters raised in our letter in more detail with you, and to present the results of research studies from other marine reserves.

The Society looks forward to your reply on the matters raised by us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Colin McLay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Colin McLay  
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New Zealand Marine Sciences Society  
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School of Biological Sciences, University of Canterbury.

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Cc Hon. Dr Wayne Mapp, Minister for Science, Research and Technology.