

Lost access/letters

**WELLINGTON RECREATIONAL MARINE FISHERS ASSOCIATION
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NEWLANDS**

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Dear Sir

This submission has been compiled under the authority of the Wellington Recreational Marine Fishers Association (WRMFA) and with the support of the New Zealand Angling and Casting Association (NZACA), a national body that represents the surfcasting and angling clubs of New Zealand.

Over the last eighteen years I have raised access concerns on behalf of the Wellington Surfcasting and Angling Club (WSAC) and the WRMFA as we are fast losing access to our region's coastline. This is now being compounded with restricted access to the wider ocean with proposed marine reserves and Taiapure. These concerns we have made known in submissions to the Wellington City Council Draft Recreational Strategy 1995, Wellington Regional Council Regional Coastal Plan 1994, Customary Reforms, Aquaculture Reform 2000, Soundings 2000 and Oceans Policy 2001.

In the Wellington Regional Coastal Plan we had asked for access to be maintained along our coast in order to fish the many bays along our rugged coastline. We had three variations to the request and not one was included in the Plan. If Government had already defined recreational fisher's rights, then the regional council would have had to define what is legal access and make provision for recreational fishers to access the sea. Now through my involvement on the stage two Oceans Policy working group we are again asking that recreational right of access to the sea be defined.

Our historical access to fish off wharves continues to be under threat and we had to defend the right of recreational fishers and the general public to access the Petone Wharf when a Golf shot commercial enterprise wanted to close off access. Then in October 2000 we had to make a submission to the Hutt City Council who were well on course to pull down the old Point Howard Wharf before public submissions were closed. So set in their plans were they that they advertised for submissions on the 10th October with a close off date of 27th October during which time they had already cut off some of the piles. The submission we presented was read at both the Eastbourne Borough Council and the HCC committee meetings, which resulted in demolition being halted, and now the wharf has been repaired for all to use.

Access to wharves we described in our submission as

Highly valued for its recreation use.

There are few wharves that are actually positioned in an area that has a surrounding habitat that attracts and holds fish. In Wellington Harbour the Miramar Wharf and the Point Howard Wharf do support a fish life. The Petone Wharf has not the habitat it used to have, as the artesian water is not rising there as it did before the early 1970s. The reason that the Point Howard Wharf has a quality fish life is because not only is it down current from the Hutt River but also just off both ends are two very big fresh water springs.

The Point Howard Wharf has fishers on it all day and night so as a recreational asset to the community of the region it has immense value not only as a fishing platform but also as place where people of all races can mix together. It is very important in a society of mixed races that such places are retained as few other places exist where there can be a social interaction between the different races of the region. There would also be few other activities where young and old are equal and can help each other while they are enjoying their recreational pursuit. Fishing off a wharf requires a level of cooperation and respect for others' rights that could never be found in other activities. For example when a fish like a Kahawai is hooked on light line it will normally pick up all the other lines and a great deal of cooperation is required for an angler to land such fish. Many also catch their first fish off a wharf and can remember the occasion for the rest of their lives.

Early morning and late in the evening the wharf will have many Islanders and Maori fishing, usually catching Kahawai in the morning and Mackerel at night. Normally they catch enough to feed the family and then go home. Other more serious fishers will target fish for a particular specie and depending on the day they could expect to catch Kahawai, Red Cod, Red Gurnard, Snapper, Horse Mackerel, Kingfish, Tarakihi, Blue Cod, Sea Run Brown Trout to name a few. Recreational fishers are fortunate here as Wellington Harbour has produced over the years the biggest variety of fish of any harbour in New Zealand with over 56 specie over 500 grams being recorded by local fishing clubs.

The major fishing clubs of the area namely the Wellington Surfcasting and Angling Club, which is over forty five years old, and the Port Nicholson Sport Fishing Club have held fishing competitions on the wharf attracting many hundred of children of the region. Both clubs consider the wharf has immense historical value for the region's fishers. Through the summer months many families can be seen enjoying the day with their children as few other wharves in Wellington Harbour have such easy access.

*It should also be of interest that in a recent research document for the Ministry of Fisheries (Project REC9802) entitled "**Motivations and Perceptions of Seawater Recreational Fishers in New Zealand**" by Akroyd Walshe Ltd (March 2000) it was discovered that fishing was high on the recreation list with 46% saying their motivation was enjoyment/pleasure/fun, 32% relaxation/leisure, 22 % recreation/recreation activity and 18% food supply/fish to eat. That demonstrates why, on those nice hot days, you will find people relaxing with a line in the water not caring if they catch a fish or not. As most fish are caught in Wellington at night the passive fisher should not be deprived of an amenity they value so highly for their leisure, and any reduction in the wharf size will ultimately cause unnecessary cramping of their activity. It should also be realised that the sea wall at Lowry Bay will shortly have its access and available fishing space severely restricted for the region's recreational fishers. At the Eastern Bays Little Blue Penguin Foundation Inc, Resource Consent Application 2 to use the Lowry Bay reclamation the concern we raised was that the available fishing space would be reduced to fifty metres with room for only twenty fishers. But the Commissioners dismissed this concern. They reasoned that affected fishers could fish off the Point Howard Wharf as it had ample space, but there will not be if any of the wharf is reduced. The threat to the wharf was not conveyed in the Hutt City Council submission, supporting the wild bird complex.*

Recreational fishers according to the Wellington Harbour Master also have no right to fish anywhere in Wellington Harbour. The Wellington Surfcasting and Angling Club, which I am also Secretary of, found this out when we ran a major fishing competition in 1995 in support of Life Flight Trust. Many fished from boats on the fresh water springs at the Falcon Shoals a shallow water area off Seatoun, that was until the old model fast ferry Lynx went through the recreational fishers at full speed producing a breaking wake of two metres that almost threw children and their parents from their boats. Once again the WRC could have prevented that, but

they advised those who complained that recreational fishers have no right to be even on the water inside the harbour. Subsequently few boats competed the next year and this competition was the last to be run. We have no right to be even on the water as the Harbour Master of Greater Wellington deems all water in Wellington Harbour to be commercial boat routes if the need arises. It is now ironic that after we advised the past Minister of Conservation of the damage the fast ferry is doing to the marine ecosystem since October 2001 the fast ferry now travels around the shoals. Then that was only after we widely reported that the proposed marine reserve is over the top of a major shipping route, which is not only contrary to the 1991 Marine Reserve Act, but it would be a joke to have a fast ferry sucking up the surface water as they travel through it.

The right to fish the Falcon Shoals is still an issue as ships of all sizes including Trans Rail ferries and overseas cruise boats all wander all over the Shoals directed by the Wellington Harbour Master. While we may have a general right to access such areas, if a ship of over five hundred tonnes approaches a smaller boat must move out of the way. To throw the complicated issue of rights up in the air the Wellington Port Company have just issued a notice to dredge the “main shipping channel” giving GPS waypoints. When the Wellington Harbour “Main Shipping Channel” is defined through the Courts, recreational fishers should be able to fish the Falcon Shoals. Some may believe they are entitled to fish there, with a Court defined shipping channel off to one side.

There is no reasonable access for the public to the whole of the Wainuiomata Beach. This includes access to Baring Head to the West and right around into Palliser Bay past Turakirae Point, as the beach access has been closed by barbed wired. This loss of access was not caused by recreational users in the first place as it was a Department of Conservation representative demanding access over two bridges they believed were public property to visit the seals which upset the farmer. When access over the bridges was stopped the situation went right of control. Now there are only twenty or so cars visiting this coast, when only two years before there was fifteen hundred. Many people used to access this coast to take their children to swim in the Orongorongo River swimming hole, but access to the car park next to the river has been barbed wired off, thanks to DOC’s staff actions. The Hutt City Council constructed a car park two kilometres from the swimming hole to demonstrate their lack of commitment to the residents of the region’s access problems.

The beach from the Orongorongo River to Pencarrow Light has been stripped of its sand which has had a massive detrimental impact of the inter tidal marine ecosystem. With a beach now ten metres deep in boulders it can not retain moisture and without moisture sand hoppers the preferred food source for moki and yellow eyed mullet are few and far between. The stripping of the sand has had a massive impact on the ability of shore based recreational fishers from obtaining the moki they used to catch in large numbers there. The stripping of the sand has prevented the Pencarrow and Fitzroy Lakes from being able to provide the traditional habitat for yellow eyed mullet to spawn. Contrary to what NIWA report on their web site yellow eyed mullet spawn up rivers, streams and inter tidal systems. When I realised it was incorrect it only took one and half hours to prove they spawn where recreational fishers have observed. A paper is being compiled for the NZ Journal of Marine and Freshwater Research that will also included their food source.

We made a submission to the Hutt City Council regarding the building of the Seaview Marina and while the Plan displayed for public viewing in the Wellington Harbour Board rooms showed a walkway along the break walls, when the HCC took over the project from the Wellington Harbour Board they dismissed all the assurances given to us. The marina was built over a major shellfish and eel grass habitat, which they destroyed when they deepened the marina. This type of habitat has been scientifically proven to be essential for juvenile fish, but the marina was closed to fishing within three months, even to Maori who still consider the area to be a historical shellfish gathering area.

I have raised at the Ocean Policy stage two working group the issue that without a defined access to the sea within a managed framework, many of the proposed ideas will be unworkable.

A right of access also has a wider meaning as a defined access to the sea has to be balanced with the probability of catching a legal fish. I wrote a submission this year to the proposed changes by Mfish to the Marlborough Sounds blue cod fishery an extract of it follows-

The pressure the blue cod fishery is receiving from commercial and recreational fishers and the obvious environmental problems not seen by Government has allowed us all including Government to see through a window into the future. Localised pressure on fish stocks is going to be a wide spread problem of the future if Government continues to endorse every marine reserves proposal. If the Department of Conservation continues to disregard the marine knowledge of recreational fishers and appoints their own staff as commissioners to decide on the submissions of marine reserve proposals it will cause massive problems in the future. Forcing the traditional and legal users of the fishery into smaller and smaller areas of the remaining available coastline is asking for trouble. There has been a number of illogically placed marine reserves by DOC with ten of the seventeen reserves being already worthless as a biodiversity study site, as they are smothered in silt, yet DOC continues to endorse projects that destroy well known fish spawning areas in New Zealand's wetlands and inter-tidal reaches of our rivers.

Whether it is Government policy or the Department of Conservation with a mandate to encourage their conservation land based groups to select areas of high recreational use as proposed marine reserves it will have the same result, there will be fewer people going fishing. Access to the sea has to be with prospect of catching a legal fish. The Wellington South Coast proposed marine reserve has to be the perfect example of where not to put a marine reserve. Not only will it not offer some protection to the fifty-six specie of fish that migrate mostly through the Chaffers Passage into Wellington Harbour but also it will force displaced recreational fishers into the region's fish nursery and spawning grounds of Wellington Harbour.

So while we will have access to the spawning sized fish that arrive for a couple of weeks a year for the remaining time we will be continually catching under sized fish. With each fish returned the odds that it will survive very long has been established by Mfish research which gives a blue cod mortality at 28%, we think is a lot higher. There are many who would like to see the Wellington Harbour become part of a managed marine park so that set nets and long lines could be controlled but if this is the only area where recreational fishers will be allowed to fish, then it too will become dead just like the Marlborough Sounds.

The Government's proposed actions to reduce access to vast areas of the sea, which produce legal fish, will cause the recreational fishing industry to rapidly decline. This is a huge industry based around proven research figures that describe that one in three New Zealanders go fishing. So not only will we see retailers of fishing products close down but there is a huge industry of boat builders and charter boat operators that will be affected.

If marine reserves were not enough of an issue we are now seeing overseas people buying up coastal properties at an alarming rate. For example at Castle Point an airfield is being constructed to take Lear Jets and the motor camp and motels have already been brought up with long time permanent caravan residents kicked out. A proposed private village of chalets has been approved without any public resource consent hearing. A proposed wharf is due to be built over what local call major paua beds again without resource consent. All the motels at Riversdale, a linking community down the coast, have also been brought up.

While still in the planning stages there are many other types of access restrictions that few will be aware of.

To enable those, who must ultimately make the decisions that have commercial and recreational balance, we would like to take this opportunity to list out the many areas in the Wellington region where we already have difficulty using or may have access restrictions to in the future.

- 1 Land north of Castle Point - in overseas ownership, access in doubt.
- 2 Castle Point reef - proposed marine reserve

- 3 Castle Point south - in overseas ownership, access in doubt.
- 4 Flat Point to Te Awaiti - access severely restricted by landowners.
- 5 White Rock north - proposed marine reserve
- 6 White Rock south - land owner access restriction
- 7 White Rock to Cape Palliser - camping and access restricted by Maori.
- 8 Whatarangi - due to become a Taiapure Reserve.
- 9 Palliser Bay to Orongorongo River - access restricted by farmer
- 10 Turakirae Head to Orongorongo River - proposed Taiapure Reserve by Maori – plans already drawn up.
- 11 Orongorongo River to Baring Head - as previously discussed, access is now only through barbed wire.
- 12 Baring Head – to Pencarrow Head - access restricted by farmer.
- 13 Fitzroy Bay to Pencarrow - proposed reserve by Greater Wellington.
- 14 Eastbourne to Pencarrow - vehicle and all types of bike access restricted by Lower Hutt City Council.
- 15 Lowry Bay boat ramp – access almost lost to a café/bird recovery complex. Only saved through a high court action by local residents. We made a submission asking for access to the break wall and ramp that was ignored.
- 16 Point Howard Wharf – long wharf closed old wharf almost pulled down as already discussed.
- 17 Seaview Marina - Hutt City Council has imposed an illegal fishing restriction in defiance of the Esplanade Reserve requirements.
- 18 Waione Street Bridge - almost closed to fishing by Greater Wellington
- 19 Hutt River mouth - restricted by dredge company complex.
- 20 Petone Wharf - a company planned to create a golf course off the wharf and applied for exclusive rights to the wharf. The site they had requested would have prevented access to the small boat ramp used by jet skis.
- 21 Petone to Picton Ferry terminal - Trans rail have posted signs advising a \$20,00 fine for crossing the tracks and erected two metre barbed wire fences, yet to catch a train access is by walking over the tracks.
- 22 Picton Ferry terminal - car park access due to be changed because land has changed hands and expansion is likely.
- 23 Kaiawharawhara reclamation - all recreation access blocked off with three metre high wire fence. Yet the reclamation continues to fall into the sea and destroy marine habitat.
- 24 Picton Ferry terminal wharves – access now restricted
- 25 Wellington wharves, from the Picton Ferry Terminal past jetties built for fishermen into inner city wharves - all closed by Wellington Port Company.
- 26 Waterloo Quay wharf – once open now a ferry terminal.
- 27 Queens Wharf – large hotel planned for this wharf – access will then be lost
- 28 Overseas Terminal - fishing banned into Chaffer's Marina by Lambton Harbour Company. Fishing for the baitfish Pilchards has been carried out by commercial and recreational fishers for a very long time in this area. When a large school of pilchards died they quickly opened the gates so that recreational fishers could collect the fish. Access is only when it suits those who open the gates
- 29 Frank Kitts Lagoon – Many used to fish in there but when a jet ski hire venture was allowed to start up without any consultation with recreational fishers the pilchards were the first fish specie to disappear never to return. If recreational fishers were consulted they would have been able to inform that in the area many specie of baitfish use the area to spawn. Another good fishing area lost which highlights that without the prospect of catching a fish access is worthless.
- 30 WCC built a wharf along side tug boat restaurant, and then closed it for fishing. Not used at night .
- 31 Oriental Bay breakwater walls – No access for recreational fishers to the finished break walls not known
- 32 Evans Bay - boat marina wharves closed by Wellington City Council.
- 33 Miramar Wharf - Port Company have just unlocked the gate after recreational pressure. The wharf has a management plan to enable access and is welcomed as an example of what can be achieved with better dialogue. This wharf was closed to fishing due to vandalism although no one was caught or prosecuted, to our knowledge. Why would a recreational fisher let a mooring rope go?

- 34 Burnham Wharf - closed by oil company.
- 35 Shelly Bay wharves - closed by RNZAF who granted access only to diplomats and now the WCC/WRC have closed the wharf. Access under consideration by WRC after our letter requesting the deck be repaired so that recreational fishers can use it again
- 36 Moa Pt – access may only be to polluted shellfish beds due to sewage out flows by Wellington City Council.
- 37 Phillips Point to Sinclair Head - proposed marine reserve by Forest and Bird Society who have publicly stated they are not interested in recreational or commercial concerns about safe access to the sea.
- 37a Phillips Point (Te Raekaihau Point) proposed marine centre taking out most of the access to the point
- 38 Oteranga Bay site of a wind turbine landing point massive access restriction predicted.
- 39 Owhiro Bay to Sinclair Head and beyond – access restricted by WCC.
- 40 Turakirae Point to Makara area- local Maori have applied for a Taiapure reserve all around the coast
- 41 Sinclair Head to Karori Rock - access to vehicles under threat from Wellington City Council who have formed another committee without allowing recreational fishers to be represented on their Healing the South. Coast plan. Another example of the discrimination towards recreational fishers by the Council.
- 42 Karori Rock access - restricted by farmers, down stream. Land ownership changed putting access under more threat.
- 43 Oteranga Bay - access restricted by Meridian.
- 44 Ohau Pt and Te Ikaamaru - access restricted by Lands and Survey Department.
- 45 Quartz Hill - access restricted by Meridian.
- 46 Mana Island - proposed Taiapure Reserve off southeastern area of island by local Iwi.
- 47 Titahi Bay – The Whitireia Park access is closed after dark, the only time that area will produce fish. by Porirua City Council.
- 48 Titahi Bay - southern access closed at night.
- 49 Pukerua Bay – Line fishing only reserve. Fully supported by recreational fishers.
- 50 Kapiti to Paraparaumu - already a marine reserve with fishing banned.
- 51 Otaki River mouth - access restricted by Maori.

If these types of closures continue, the basic right of all New Zealanders to have access to the marine environment will be a thing of the past. It is very unlikely that any area given a reserve status will ever be given back to the other types of recreational user to enjoy again. With Government willing to have up to ten percent of New Zealand designated as marine reserves it is imperative that the location of these reserves have the full support of the recreational users. We have already had designated four reserves that were installed in an area other than where recreational fishers declared the best area for a reserve. One of these resulted in a select committee looking into changes to the Act so that the surrounding users will gain some benefit.

Of major concern now to all recreational fishers is the obvious intention by Government to endorse areas as proposed marine reserves that are of high recreational activity. We note these areas have been proposed by land based conservation groups who continually demonstrate their lack of local marine knowledge at all levels. The frustration expressed by many recreational fishers that the wrong areas are being selected as marine reserves continues to fall on deaf ears.

Access to the remaining coastline is already going to cause problems as for example in Wellington recreational fishers will find all fishing in Wellington Harbour. While we accept that the country is committed to installing marine reserves, a perfect example of where not to put a marine reserve, is along the Wellington South Coast miles from the harbour entrance. Already the harbour is seeing an increase in nets and long lines so while we will have access to the harbour's fish specie the pressure with an increase in all fishing methods will make access a continual confrontation.

While we may have a limited form of access to many areas this limited form of access will in time cause many confrontations which will in time set races against races land owners against walkers and recreational fishers

against conservation groups. With this Government direction there will be no winners, just continual confrontations.

Yours sincerely

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