

In the matter of the Resource Management Act 1991

and

in the matter of the publication by Wellington City Council of Proposed District Plan Change 32 (Renewable Energy), and Proposed District Plan Change 33 Ridgelines and Hilltops (Visual Amenity) and Rural Area.

Hearing 3-4 February 2005

My name is Jim Miko

I am here representing all of the Wellington region's recreational fishers through my involvement as Secretary of the WRMFA and the Wellington Surfcasting and Angling Club. I am also the Honorary Vice President of our club's national body, the New Zealand Angling Casting Association. Through that connection, I speak and actively represent other recreational fishers through being the sole recreational fisher on the Oceans Policy stage two working group and the Department of Conservation Non Government Organisation committee. I have represented the region's recreational fishers on a number of Ministry of Fishery committees for twenty years. Over the years, through my fishing experience and private research, I have acquired knowledge of many marine ecosystems, which I will cover further on.

However first I would like to introduce my marine knowledge and myself

I am here not only representing recreational fishers in a number of capacities both formal and informal, but as a person who has made marine ecosystems a serious hobby for quite a number of years. In this presentation I will raise concerns I have regarding, access, irreparable environmental damage concerns and I will describe the katabatic wind patterns we experience around this coast from Quartz Hill to Owhiro Bay. However the most serious concern I have is for the freshwater, inter tidal and marine ecosystems, which will be subjected to irreparable damage from the run off from the construction and maintenance of a wind farm on these fragile hills.

I also communicate with the Option 4 group managers on a regular basis who invited me to Auckland to give a talk. A submission I wrote to Government regarding access is on their site. Through my connection with the NZRFC, those in the Big Game Fishing Council are also informed of things that happen in Wellington that I get involved in or have been informed of. I am also a regular writer for the New Zealand Fishing Coast to Coast fishing magazine raising and discussing a variety of issues facing recreational fisher today. As I appear to be the only recreational fisher presenting a submission that represents a national body it could be inferred I am also representing the one in three New Zealanders who go fishing, as I report back to a great percentage of them through this network. I would also be very surprised if there would be anyone who has the marine knowledge to identify the impact a wind farm construction would have on marine ecosystems.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

A wind farm will cause major environmental damage to inter tidal and marine ecosystems.

In 2001 I was asked by Mr Hugh Barr Wellington Regional Councillor, and Secretary of the Council of Outdoor Recreation Association, if I could advise the Wellington Regional Council as to what if any marine species would be affected by the planned realignment of the Hutt River, as they had asked NIWA, Mfish and DoC and they were unable to provide any information. Understanding marine ecosystems has been my hobby for years and I was able to provide a detailed paper on this subject and subsequently discovered the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement had no information describing the importance of the inter-tidal systems in our rivers or streams. I have since been involved in the review of this Statement and have identified thirty-five further omissions caused through major errors and omissions in four of our nationally recognised databases. That discovery was made while compiling information for a project I was invited to help with by the Foundation for Research, Science Technology (FRST) it is called "Natural Ecosystems". The inter-tidal zone has never been recognised by Government and this omission has made a major impact on the scientifically proven major food source for dolphins, which is yellow-eyed mullet. This marine specie lives most of its life in this inter-tidal zone. Unfortunately for years we have been told wetlands are wastelands and councils have almost destroyed them. At the last DOC NGO meeting we were informed we are losing five hundred maui and hector dolphins a year and as only a small percentage are caught in nets, the rest we as a nation are starving to death through our ignorance of the importance of the inter-tidal zone. .

Run off from the hills

A construction of the scale proposed will, no matter how good the preventive measures are to prevent mud flows into the inter tidal zone, it will occur. With the vegetation gone that would have protected the dirt from rains the increase in run off from these hills will be impressive. The mud run off from this wind farm project will not only destroy a major yellow-eyed mullet spawning estuary and wetland at Makara but it will also be another major contributor to accelerating the extinction of maui and hector dolphins through the food chain. This estuary could fall under New Zealand's obligation requirements of the Ramsar Convention as it receives many migrating birds.

I have long made a point that marine management has to be more than proposing or installing a marine reserve and what is proposed for Makara absolutely endorses this view. It is completely illogical and an example of the lack of marine knowledge that exists within local Government and national Government that the Wellington City Council is still supporting a marine reserve while endorsing the sinking of a ship in it that will change the existing marine ecosystem for ever, has installed a sewage pipe that is not out past the nearest headland, is now sending mille screened sewage down it with massive quantities of chemicals and now within sight of this proposed marine reserve think it would be a good idea to destroy the remaining coastlines marine ecosystem by opening up the hills to construct a massive wind farm complex.

A wind farm requires massive earth works and I have been advised that nine hundred thousand cubic metres of material will have to be shifted. The run off from such major hill side scaring will be considerable and confirms a view held by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment in his document "Growing for Good" 2004 that New Zealand is losing two to three million tonnes of dirt a year. I have learnt there is no legal requirement to over sow bare earth and in the past dams to trap the mud in

times of heavy rain have all been totally inadequate. The Pauatahanui Inlet provides a perfect example of the inadequate management of mud run off and now the extremely important native eelgrass found in estuaries has been almost wiped out, as it is unable to grow through the mud at the rate that is being deposited into our rivers and harbours.

If we are required to accept mud run off as part and parcel of a wind farm then it will severely impact on a number of other marine ecosystems. The scallop shellfish beds in Te Ikaamru and Ohau Bay will disappear over night, as the mud will smother their sand habitat. NIWA research has found shellfish do not settle in mud and the loss of this major food source to marine species is far too high a price to pay. This was proved on Petone Beach when the contractors at Gear Island pushed the dredge waste of mud from the sand extraction plant into the sea. When the shellfish beds disappeared along the eastern Petone Beach Iwi and locals complained and the Greater Wellington Regional Council raised another resource consent and shifted the dredge waste dumpsite off the Hutt River mouth. Unfortunately such is their marine knowledge the site they selected, which they called natural holes and deprecations, were in fact submarine fresh water springs and now another unresearched marine ecosystem is being destroyed.

This mud run off will contaminate paua beds, which I have been informed through Ministry of Fisheries meetings have unbelievable special significance to Maori of Te Rauparaha descent and I know this land remains under a treaty claim for a very logical reason. Maori who have the marine knowledge believe for another very logical reason that the paua stocks around the Southwestern area of the North Island including Oteranga Bay to Sinclair Head provide the spawning stock of all the regions paua and that is easy explained. The dispersion of this spat by the fast Cook Strait currents is known to reach up the Wairapara coast and includes the important commercially harvested D'Urville Island paua stocks. While there has been placed a shellfish ban at Pukerua Bay, to bring back paua, research is indicating while there is a high spat fall the paua do not survive because the area is subjected to heavy silt contamination from excessive land run off coming down the coast. The mud run off from not only the construction of the wind farm, but also the exposed bare earth that will be exposed for ever and a day will severely reduce the paua stocks mentioned and this will become obvious within five years.

As the Makara estuary and wetlands become smothered in mud the mud will combine with the shingle bank at the stream mouth and compact to a concrete type material that natural storm flows will not be able to breach. Almost instantly house flooding in the estuary will become a common occurrence, as the local method to clear the mouth will be ineffective. To think that such problems could be addressed through the resource consent process puts far too much responsibility on Commissioners as unfortunately we are now seeing far too often the resource consent conditions are not being complied with. At other times the environmental impact has not been realised in the final decision by Commissioners, who appear to become overwhelmed by the mountains of information and submissions.

This mud flowing out to sea will not only cause alga blooms but it will absolutely destroy the habitat that yellow-eyed mullet have been observed spawning in. Yellow-eyed mullet are the major food source for dolphins, which already has two species, maui and hector, facing certain extinction. These two species we have seen off our coast, an observation confirmed by DOC scientists at the milli screened sewage resource consent.

The mudflow into Te Ikaamru, Ohau and Oteranga Bay will be devastating on the species that spawn and feed in the clear waters and prime sand in these bays. Fish are very selective where they spawn and these bays trap the warm water essential for successful spawning, however it is highly unlikely they will spawn in mud.

We are aware, and it is obvious that commercial fishers know also that a number of marine species spawn at different times in the waters of these bays. We have identified blue cod, tarakihi, warehou, John Dory, kingfish and snapper arriving in large numbers, when in spawning condition.

The South Makara Stream will also be contaminated with run off and although unknown to science it is known to Maori and recreational fishers that at certain times of the year massive quantities of eels come into the stream and can be observed spawning. The latest Ministry of Fishery discoveries on crayfish spat fall and ocean current directions off the New Zealand coast suggests that it is impossible for eels to spawn at some place in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and then return as science has suggested in the past. With almost no research into the inter-tidal zone such observation will remain hidden from science for many years yet.

Katabatic winds of high humidity

Wind from the northwest at 5 knots at Makara will usually be 35 knots at Owhiro Bay and vice versa in a southerly at Makara. It is most likely the wind farm will be shut down quite often unable to produce power due to excessive wind gusts. Marine charts warn of the katabatic affect of wind and these wind gusts have flipped boats off the south coast.

The wind from the Northwest as it reaches the coast is very humid and salt laden and the effect it will have on a metal structure comprised of many different metals will be more severe than a more inland site as electrolysis will cause all sorts of damage. Machinery working in this area has major electrical problems with near new loaders destroying alternators and starters every year. It is also normal to replace entire wiring looms on machinery working close to the sea at Makara. These wind power plants will end up very noisy due to electrolysis and will quite likely be heard by residents in Karori, Brooklyn and Owhiro Bay.

ACCESS AROUND THE COAST THREATENED

For all recreational fishers access to the sea is getting harder and harder and the privatisation of this coastline by the wind farm will severely impact on recreational fishers traditional fishing areas as already we have to travel through farmland to reach the southern bays. The power company has made access down to Opau Bay difficult already.

We already have forty-one areas from the Otaki River to Castle Point where access to the sea either over land or around the coast is non-existent or severely restricted. The question that should be answered now is will the wind farm restrict access? How much of our coastline is likely to remain accessible, for present and future generations of recreational fishers.

VISUAL POLLUTION

Makara region is a unique area

To turn this countryside into an industrial wind machine dominated landscape is just not logical with past WCC decisions on visual pollution. It has the only public road access to the Southwestern landmass of the North Island. A great majority of the region's other coastlines has already been closed by a local body using the Resource Management Act or by farmers restricting access with barbed wire. Our coastal headlands are being systematically closed off to the public through privation and the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Makara and Cape Terawhiti should be regarded as a regional asset.

We find, out on the water, divers and fishers from Masterton to Wanganui accessing its rich waters. The view of this coastline from the sea to shore is stunning - it should not be spoilt. The view of hills from the sea is what makes the Cook Strait so interesting to travellers and fishers alike. For the many plane travellers, it is a rare sight not to see even the most travelled looking out of the plane's window as they pass over the unspoilt rolling Makara hills. The hills of Makara should be viewed as the gateway to Wellington as many of those on cruise ships sight these hills as they pass between the islands.

The hills of Wellington should never be taken as something to create a visual pollution upon.

Some years ago the residents of Tawa were able to put enough pressure on ECNZ to route the overhead power cables from on top of their hills to behind their hills. On the South Coast the residents, not ten miles away brought the Wellington City Council to its knees over the Owhiro Bay Quarry. They used such phrases as "an eye sore to the coastal view" and "the detrimental image it portrays" to overseas travellers who look out the Picton Ferry windows. When the Wellington City Council looked for an alternative site for the quarry they air lifted a drilling rig in so that the hills would not be scarred with tracks. Not fully understood by those who do not live within the greater City boundaries is that the vast majority of Wellington's residents choose to live on hills so they can view other hills and many travel up the hills so they can obtain a different view of the many hills.

Do we want to portray that Wellington is a big industrial city

The concept to promote a wind power station upon the Makara hills is quite illogical as to a traveller it will portray that Wellington is a big industrial city. That view could not be further from the truth with car assembly plants closing and no major ship repairs being carried out now, coupled with a deregulated Government policy-making heavy industry a thing of the past. Many including the Wellington City Council view Wellington as a city of culture and the new museum and inner city housing construction currently under way certainly conveys that message. We should all ask the question what would we like visitors to remember Wellington for, our unpolluted hills or a string of wind turbines? Have we really a council that is promoting Wellington as a tourist destination and city of culture with a unique harbour views or have we now a council promoting Wellington as the capital city that has strung up wind turbines like Christmas tree lights? Is this what we want them to first see, a wind farm on the skyline churning away.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RECREATIONAL FISHER VIEWS

Why recreational fishers go fishing

Some year's back while on one of their committees I asked that the Ministry of Fisheries to devise a research project that identifies why people go fishing so that environmental managers would be able to refer to statistical information. That project was called "Motivations and Perceptions of Seawater Recreational Fishers in New Zealand" (Akroyd Walshe Ltd Ministry of Fisheries Project REC 9802). The report asks what the effect of closed areas will have on their satisfaction and how it relates to voluntary compliance of the existing regulations. Voluntary compliance is essentially the way of the future but it will

be surely diminished if another powerful local body frustrates fishers by being instrumental in closing access and then forces them to continually look at repetitive noisy machinery working on the hills.

The research showed that 10% who go fishing catch 90% of the fish proving many who go out fishing hardly catch a fish. To many, who fish off Makara for the first time, catching one or two blue cod or Kahawai is all they will achieve. Which brings me to another point, what do they do for four of five hours on the water. They look at the hills not only to stop being seasick but also to see the many changing patterns on the hills as the sun comes either around the coast or on the still winter's days when I took these photos on display. It is quite rare to be able to catch fish all day while anchored on the one spot so looking around while fishing is a natural part of fishing.

Look back on the coast from the sea

On 11 June 1998 TV One presented a news item that focused on the debris that had drifted onto the beaches of Stewart Island and the work DOC and others did with the aid of helicopters to remove the offending material. The reason given was it was an eye sore to the walkers of the trails. If you ever get the chance to look back on the coast from the sea you will surely find more walkers on this coast than on Stewart Island. That view should be as my photo displays a rugged unspoilt coastline. I do not think this generation has the right to spoil the view we currently enjoy. A few years back DOC released a draft management plan for Somes Island. It called for new tracks and roads all over the island, many like myself protested quite loudly and that section of the plan was dropped.

To summarise

I repeat the Cook Strait and the Makara hills should be viewed as the gateway to Wellington our city, not as an eyesore that will have our generation ridiculed for its lack of foresight as to the visual environmental damage we created. Wellington City Council have in recent times demonstrated a great awareness for the visual pollution of the skyline even using helicopters to remove old trees in the town belt so that tracks do not scar our hills. Another is housing developers who are now required to put all services under ground to avoid the visual pollution such services would create. We hope the Wellington City Council do not get out of step with local community concerns for the impact visual pollution has on our environment.

The impact of a massive construction over these hills on fresh water, inter tidal and marine ecosystems will be massive. That construction will severely impact on the yellow-eyed mullet spawning in the Makara estuary. That loss of a food source will impact on dolphins, which have a scientific proven link to this very food chain. Just because dolphins have no voice it does not give anyone of us the right to knowingly destroy their food source.

The marine environment urgently needs protection from poor Government and local body management and the green drive for marine reserves will not prevent the massive environmental damage to marine life that this wind farm project planned by the WCC will cause. I have just had a story published in the NZ Fishing Coast to Coast magazine called "Bad luck hector you are dead meat" it is about how we as a nation have worked together to starve dolphins to death by destroying their food source. This project to scar our hills and smother freshwater, inter tidal and marine ecosystem with mud for years and years will also impact on commercial fish stocks and will also contribute to the extinction of maui and hector dolphin.