

**NORTHLAND CONSERVANCY  
MARINE CONSERVATION & ADVOCACY  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
COMPILED BY V. KERR**

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### **The Vision**

The Department of Conservation's Northland Conservancy and the Northland Conservation Board invite you to be part of a new commitment to the conservation and protection of the region's highly valued marine environment and biodiversity.

This strategic plan outlines a proposal led by DOC for enhanced and increased advocacy for our marine environment. The Department hopes the recently announced biodiversity funding package will provide resources that will allow the Northland Marine Conservation Network and Advocacy Strategy to be developed and formally launched during the 2000/2001 financial year.

This strategy will be based on getting Northland community support for achieving an effective network of protected marine areas throughout the region. It will be based on the "no-take" marine reserve concept, but will also include all other options for marine protection that will contribute to the overall goal of the Strategy.

The plan recognises the ultimate goal of the Network Strategy is to create a system capable of sustaining the biodiversity values of the coastal marine environment. It has been recognised that the vision can not be achieved without widespread community support and involvement and DOC's role will therefore be to encourage as many groups and individuals to get behind the vision.

Scientific evidence and opinion has continued to promote the goal of **protecting a minimum of 10 % of representative no-take areas in each region of NZ.**

Some scientists have said that this should be increased to 20-50 %. The last ten years have also proved that without these "no take" protected areas it is impossible to determine whether our current management of the seas is sustainable. Related to this argument is the realisation that we must develop precautionary approach or risk major biodiversity losses.

While the Department has traditionally placed its major emphasis on promoting "no-take" areas like marine reserves, this Strategy will promote a wider range of options that will serve to benefit the protection of the marine environment.

Local management involvement, special fisheries regulations and kaitiakitanga in the form of taiapure and mataitai areas are examples, all of which could contribute to the end goal.

This concept of a network of protected areas should avoid some of the conflicts that dominated efforts to implement marine protection in the past. It will provide an opportunity for a wide range groups with a vested interest in the marine environment to get behind the efforts.

This is important because each component of the network will therefore need to be accepted by all stakeholders as part of the overall vision. All parties should, as a result, regard achievement of every protected area as a success for the overall strategy, thus increasing motivation to overcome obstacles.

Taking a wider approach to developing a Northland strategic network also allows for more flexibility to ensure the best approach is used for each different community.

This advocacy approach recognises a growing urgency at a grass roots community level, as well as government commitment to halt the decline of marine ecosystems. The current change in commitment flows from:

- A growing appreciation for the marine environment
- A better understanding of what is being lost
- Rapidly expanding scientific evidence of the value of protected areas (e.g. recent Kapiti report)
- Recognition of the popularity of protected areas, (e.g. intense use at Leigh)
- The acknowledgment by Government agencies of Maori traditional knowledge, values and ability to care for and manage natural resources
- The community based renewal of tikanga Maori around Northland and the desire to re-connect with the marine environment. This change parallels growing ecological awareness in the general community.
- The understanding of the relationship of marine biodiversity values to economic activity
- International commitments and a desire to avoid repeating the mismanagement of other Nations while adopting proven solutions

Commitment to the Network Strategy offers many benefits:

- It provides a vehicle for the positive and progressive goals of community and government to come together
- It provides an opportunity to effectively advocate a collective goal and vision for Northland's marine environment.
- It allows us to move on to much more sophisticated and powerful ecological messages in advocacy, such as restoration, connectivity of habitats, whole ecosystem functioning and ultimately the connection with our future freshwater/landuse and estuary advocacy programmes
- It provides DOC with the opportunity to engage the wider community in its vision
- It is ideal for community and school based education/advocacy
- It provides ideal opportunities to fulfil DOC's Section 4 Conservation Act responsibilities

- It is consistent with DOC policy
- It would work in well with State of the Environment reporting/monitoring and Biodiversity Strategy Goals– therefore would be likely to have strong central government support as it unfolds

### **Notes on Network Strategy:**

The aim of using the Network Strategy approach is to get stakeholders from throughout Northland and further afield involved in the process. After the first year a stakeholders representatives group will take an increasing role in seeking funding and managing the programme.

The activities detailed below are, therefore, only guidelines for the direction of the advocacy programme. The stakeholder representatives group, once formed, will determine the final shape of the direction and priorities for each year.

1. Develop a user friendly “How to Manual” for the full range of marine care and protection options. Utilise existing resources and integrate with Ministry of Fisheries and Iwi processes. Take this initiative out into the communities with seminar/hui. Could follow up with kicking off a Northland supporter’s network.
2. Set up a focused support team for groups considering and developing marine protection/management proposals. This would help them work through the various processes and link them up with outside assistance wherever possible. Experience has shown that groups in Northland have really struggled to make it through the entire process of marine reservation/protection with out outside assistance.
3. Develop a conflict resolution capacity within the team via either training, recruitment of staff or contract in expertise. This will be essential to avoid some of the problems that have occurred in the past where some interests have not been thoroughly considered in the process.
4. Development and promotion of school based campaign. There are already some good concepts, “Wet Library” and materials out there to work with.
5. Develop the capacity within communities to undertake a marine care and protection role. This could involve restoring the knowledge base surrounding traditional kaitiakitanga of that community, or specialised training for key individuals. Sharing information and models between the communities would be a key element. DOC could also adopt a “seeding” role in this approach and that it could be implemented by an outside organisation or group and backed by external funding.

## **Actions Planned**

1. **Promotion of the Overall Network Strategy** This will involve getting Northland's institutions, Iwi and wider communities involved in the process. There is a possibility that the Department and others could seed an external organisation to fulfil this role backed by external funding. (See notes below), (fully funded for first year)
2. Set up a project to develop effective communication and involvement with Northland Iwi to resolve the various issues around **Kaitiakitanga**.

This will involve setting up a process so that ideas and models for interpretation of, and/or changes in the legislation. (Marine Reserves Act and possibly the Fisheries Act) can be put forward. This will allow the development of Northland solutions to the challenges. The potential of this strategy to empower Northland communities is significant.

3. Prepare **Northland Prioritised Marine Classification Criteria** based on previous scientific work in Northland and current marine classification work being done at the Regional level by DOC.

These criteria could also take into account priority Conservation Management Areas that adjoin the sea, in combination with other commercial, social, logistical, management and other implementation considerations.

4. Develop at least one **DOC Sponsored Application** for a marine reserve from year 2 onwards. This would take into account priorities in the Northland Conservation Management Strategy (CMS). This strategic document identifies the following areas as priorities for possible marine reserves: Mimiwhangata, Cavalli Islands, Three Kings Islands, Hokianga, Hen & Chickens Islands, Whangarei Harbour, Tapuaetahi, and the Northern harbours of Parengarenga, Houhora, and Rangaunu harbours.

## **Policy and Management Documents Supporting This Strategy**

This strategy is focused on putting together a series of practical approaches for getting results from marine protection advocacy in Northland region.

The common goal of all the documents mentioned below is protection of marine biodiversity values. The actions most often called for in the guiding documents are:

- The establishment of an effective representative network of marine protection areas
- The development of a scientifically based marine classification system upon which to base a protection network
- The involvement and empowerment of Iwi and local communities in marine protection and sustainable use and management of the marine environment
- The effective management of existing marine protection areas
- Contributing to legislative reform in the marine protection area and working towards effective integrated management

The policy and management documents referred to here are:

*Restoring The Dawn Chorus - Department of Conservation Strategic Business Plan*  
*Conservation Management Strategy - Northland Conservancy*  
*Goals & Objectives - Northland Conservation Board*  
*2000/2001 Annual Conservation Directions - Department of Conservation Head Office*  
*Draft Marine Reserves Strategy - Department of Conservation, Head Office*  
*Kaupapa Atawhai Strategy - Department of Conservation, Head Office*  
*Strategic Research Programme Statements - Head Office, Department of Conservation*  
*New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement*  
*New Zealand's Biodiversity Strategy, Our Chance to Turn the Tide*

***“When our children look into the sea, will they be sad with what is left or will they be proud of what we’ve conserved and sustained?” (Ballantine 1993)***

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