



caring about you & your environment

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Report to Environment Committee
from Paul Denton, Policy Advisor , Resource Policy

Regional Council submission to the Oceans Policy Group on Oceans Policy: Values and Vision

1. Purpose

To seek the Committee's input to and approval of a submission on *Oceans Policy: Values and Vision* to the Oceans Policy Group.

2. Background

In November 1999, Councillors attended a workshop on the marine environment. The outcome from this workshop sought a 'vision' for the marine environment and a possible role for Council into the future. Subsequently, a work programme was planned. This consisted of a number of work strands, one to gather more biophysical information about the marine environment, secondly to find out what people thought and felt about it, and finally to analyse our existing policy frameworks in relation to marine legislation. The findings of this work were delivered to Councillors at another workshop held on 20 June 2001.

In March 2001, cabinet (through Hon Pete Hodgson) set up a committee of Ministers responsible for policy to look into the policies that govern our marine environment. The Minister set up an Oceans Policy Group, lead by Dame Cath Tizard, to consult widely with the public on the development of a national Oceans Policy. This Group's task is to define a vision, and to identify the goals and principles important to managing the marine environment. The Ministerial Advisory Committee will be reporting to Ministers on its findings on 30 September 2001.

Given the work of Council in this matter and the work of the Oceans Policy Group, it is timely for the Council to make a written submission on the values and vision for the marine environment. Staff have prepared a draft submission and circulated it to Councillors for comment. A copy of the draft is attached to this report.

3. Values

The Oceans Policy Group has requested that submitters state what they value about the marine environment, how they benefit from the oceans, how the activities they undertake affect the oceans, what values are in conflict, and how should these conflicts be resolved.

The draft submission has not attempted to answer each question specifically. Rather, it was decided to provide the Oceans Policy Group with the ‘values’ information gained from survey results, and responses from the focus group discussions. These are described below:

A telephone survey of 1000 respondents produced the following results:

- Over 85% of respondents think the marine environment is important to them.
- The most common activity in the marine environment is travelling on the Cook Strait ferries, and boating in general. Other activities are diving, and deep-sea fishing.
- Over 50% of respondents thought the biggest issue facing the marine environment is pollution from rubbish (mostly plastic bags and bottles), and sewage. Other problems noted were overfishing, oil spills and algal blooms.
- In spite of the high approval rating many people (over 65%) declared they knew hardly anything about the marine environment.

Six focus group sessions were attempted to derive more in-depth responses from people about the marine environment. In summary, the results are:

- Many expressed a dis-satisfaction with the current state of the marine environment, noting that visible forms of pollution (rubbish) are the biggest problem. There was also concern for the total depletion by some people of all living things (shellfish, and seaweed) that seems to be occurring in some parts of the coast.
- People have a ‘connection’ with the sea. Connections can vary from the emotional (the sea creates thoughts of tranquillity and peacefulness in people) to interactions (activities undertaken on the surface or beneath the surface).
- Generally, people wished for a clean and sustainable marine environment.

4. A ‘Vision’ for the marine environment

Oceans Policy group has requested that submitters come up with their ‘vision’ for the marine environment in 20 to 50 years time. In putting forward a vision for the marine environment, Council has an opportunity to answer some of the more detailed questions requested by the Oceans Policy Group.

The Council’s ‘vision’ for the marine environment (20 to 50 years time) would need to have some or all of the following components:

- (a) Clean and healthy water.
- (b) People have accessibility to the coast and freedom of movement on the water.
- (c) People and communities are better informed on marine issues.
- (d) The science community is able to continue to research and provide information on marine matters.

- (e) The ethic of sustainable ecosystems pervades marine management legislation and resource management decision-making.
- (f) A new system of resource utilisation and conflict resolution is invoked, to handle differing views, ideologies, and aspirations for the marine environment.
- (g) A system of temporary and permanent marine reserves is established around New Zealand waters, to protect sensitive endemic marine environments, and provide fish stock for depleted inshore fisheries.

4. **Communication**

A copy of the final submission will be sent to the Oceans Policy Group.

5. **Recommendation**

That the Committee adopts the Draft Submission.

Report prepared by:

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