



OCEANS POLICY

HEALTHY SEA: HEALTHY SOCIETY

**Summary of consultation undertaken by
the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Oceans Policy**

30 September 2001



SUMMARY

A Ministerial Advisory Committee was convened by a group of six Cabinet ministers who are working to develop an Oceans Policy for New Zealand. The task of the Committee was to consult widely with New Zealanders to understand their aspirations, concerns, values and visions associated with the sea. This document presents our findings to Ministers, so they can define a vision and move on to developing and implementing policy.

We used public meetings and hui throughout New Zealand, supported by a media campaign, to meet with New Zealanders and listen to their views. Over 2000 people attended our public meetings and hui, some as individuals, some as representatives of stakeholder or interest groups. We received 1160 written submissions, and had over 300,000 downloads from our website. In addition we distributed some 500 resource kits to schools.

New Zealand perspectives

The ocean is central to the identity and well-being of New Zealanders. Most feel some personal connection to the sea; some express themselves passionately. The spaciousness, silence, vastness, power and “otherness” of the sea are important to many people. New Zealanders want their intangible values to be given some weight.

Maori have a strong spiritual connection with the realm of *Tangaroa*. They believe their world view should be accorded respect and standing in an Oceans Policy. Maori *tikanga* (traditional practices such as *rahui*) reflect the values of balance, life-force, caretaking, and duty of care. The provisions of Article Two of the Treaty of Waitangi provide that Maori have joint management responsibility and, accordingly, they want to be active participants at all levels as a Treaty partner.

A healthy sea

An Oceans Policy should reflect and be responsive to the inter-connections between the air, sea and land and to the physical and biological dynamics of the ocean and along the coastline. Decisions made about land-based activities must take into account their effect on the sea.

Management responses should be of an integrated nature and reflect natural systems such as ecosystems rather than imposed boundaries.

New Zealanders insist on a clean and healthy sea but know it will be difficult to achieve and will take time and be at some cost. Discharge of untreated sewage, effluent or other potentially toxic material into the sea is unacceptable.

There is strong support for the need to act to protect the health of marine eco-systems. This needs to be defined, threats to it identified and management tools matched to the nature of those threats. There was also concern at general degradation of marine eco-systems arising from many uses, including fishing activity. There was widespread support for the level of marine protection necessary to ensure the health of marine eco-systems but a desire to have a range of flexible and responsive tools available to achieve that. Protection measures should take into account customary use and management.

A healthy society

Many aspects of New Zealand society rely on marine infrastructure. Secure provision of marine infrastructure services is a matter of national importance. The sea is an important source of present and potential economic benefit. The relative importance to the economy of marine-based activity is increasing and some of the country's fastest growing industries involve the oceans. There is a broad range of opinion regarding management of economic activities. Economic opportunities should be allowed to develop in an adaptable regime, monitored and evaluated in terms of potential economic, social and environmental costs and benefits.

Recreation and leisure activity along the coast and sea are extensive and valued. There is conflict associated with ocean-based recreation in its various forms, with management of recreational fishing an area of conspicuous complexity. New Zealanders value and want to retain free and open access to the sea, and while accepting some curtailments, want to be confident that such access will continue to be available. An Oceans Policy must provide a clear, fair and equitable process for allocating access to the sea and associated resources that reflects the wide range of values held in relation to space and resources of the marine environment.

Framework for the future

Many New Zealanders want to take responsibility, either individually or collectively, for what they do in relation to the marine environment, and want to be confident that others will also take responsibility for their actions.

Knowledge (information and insight) is essential for managing human impacts. There are many valid sources of knowledge, including scientific research, customary traditions and practical experience. Many New Zealanders are concerned that we know too little to manage the oceans wisely. A cautious approach needs to be balanced by research directions based on knowledge gaps and the realisation that doing nothing can have its own cost. There is a need to communicate knowledge amongst all parties – government, knowledge holders, decision-makers, communities and the public.



New Zealanders want to have confidence in decision-making about the marine environment. Most New Zealanders seek a policy framework that accommodates and reflects a wide range of values and perspectives and thus minimises conflict and costs. Many submitters want to be part of decision-making, particularly relating to local issues, without resorting to adversarial processes that do little to contribute to enduring solutions. Finding a balance between local input and central governance will be a challenge. A simple, principled and flexible framework is required that focuses on the effects of activities in an integrated way, is not unduly prescriptive and is efficient, durable and adaptable.

New Zealanders recognise the sea as a global entity, and want their Oceans Policy to lead the world. People want better integration of the range of activities and processes currently associated with managing their involvement with the marine environment. Compliance and enforcement are an important issue. A holistic approach is required, both to reflect people's views and values, and to take account of the dynamic and interconnected physical reality of the marine environment. People want a transparent and participatory decision-making process that:

- is based on values
- is focused on the future and acknowledges the past
- strikes a balance between certainty, flexibility and responsiveness
- requires and promotes informed decision-making
- requires caution where knowledge is inadequate
- is efficient and avoids imposing unnecessary cost
- promotes individual and collective responsibility for the well-being of the environment
- accommodates the range of legitimate interests.

Challenges for an **Oceans** Policy

The sheer vastness, complexity, and fragility of New Zealand's oceans, coupled with expectations from a small but value-laden society, means the challenges are many and that no solution will be easy or immediate. The context in which these challenges will be addressed is a combination of the physical, cultural and social heritage of New Zealand. Solutions will have to reflect the distinct mix of:

the diversity and size of the area for which we are responsible

the implications of a long and, in many places, isolated coastline

a small population base

strong social and cultural connections to the sea

economic dependence on the sea – direct and indirect

the Maori world view

- rights accorded Maori under Article Two of the Treaty of Waitangi.

A vision for New Zealand's oceans

New Zealanders want:

- Clean water so they can eat safely from their sea.
- Clean water to swim in.
- The marine environment to be healthy and productive, with biodiversity protected from external threats.
- The intrinsic and intangible values of the ocean recognised.
- Management of human interaction with the marine environment to reflect New Zealand perspectives and in particular the Maori world view.
- The ability to enjoy the economic benefits without compromising the health and well-being of the oceans.
- Certainty and clarity of the rights and responsibilities associated with use and enjoyment of the marine environment.
- Ready individual access to the sea and coastline to meet a wide range of social and recreational needs.
- All New Zealanders to take responsibility for the well-being of the seas and to have access to appropriate information to allow them to act responsibly and to participate constructively in decision-making.
- To have management that does not compromise future interests and needs, and ensures that a healthy sea is part of the heritage of New Zealand's children.

Values for an Oceans Policy

New Zealanders want an Oceans Policy that will:

- set clear goals
- integrate separate management processes
- provide open and transparent decision-making that allows for informed participation
- provide fair and equitable means to balance competing aspirations
- reflect the range of values held in relation to the marine environment
- strike a balance between the need for adaptability and consistency
- provide for the optimal realisation of benefits without compromising the quality of the environment
- ensure that management decisions are informed by adequate knowledge and due caution is exercised
- promote a collective sense of responsibility.

We have a chance to develop a policy based on the collective vision of New Zealanders, harnessing their passion, using New Zealand ingenuity and knowledge, and involving a responsible and informed population. An Oceans Policy has the potential to be a powerful force for change and lead us into a better future as a healthy society supported by a healthy sea.





OCEANS POLICY

This report was produced by the
Oceans Policy Secretariat on behalf of
the Ministerial Advisory Committee on
Oceans Policy.

Copies may be obtained from the
Oceans Policy website:
www.oceans.govt.nz

or from
The Oceans Policy Secretariat
P O Box 5582
Lambton Quay
Wellington

or from
The Office of the Hon Pete Hodgson
Minister Responsible for Oceans Policy
Parliament Buildings
Wellington .

