

Letter sent to all New Zealand Members of Parliament just after the 1996 election. Also enclosed was a short video describing the history of marine reserves.

4th February 1997

### **A policy for Marine Reserves**

Dear Member of Parliament,

You are very busy, but watching the enclosed video could combine some family pleasure with some important work. Many of the underwater photographs are beautiful, and the subject is of interest to all ages.

New Zealand's first marine reserve was established 20 years ago, near Leigh. Since then 12 more have been set up, 4 await ministerial decision, and at least 20 proposals are under public discussion. 'No-take' marine reserves have proved useful to education and science, popular for recreation and tourism, and helpful in conservation. The idea is gaining increasing attention overseas, especially as an addition to standard fisheries management.

Successful proposals for marine reserves have been made by a wide range of organisations, including a university, dive clubs, conservation groups, Maori bodies, government departments, local citizen groups and commercial fishermen. There is widespread agreement that the idea is practical and sensible. Most of the main political parties promise to create more marine reserves (one has not said either way).

#### **However there is no real policy about how to get more marine reserves.**

Each proposal depends on local initiative and voluntary enthusiasm. Each case is decided separately, and lengthy delays (that annoy both supporters and objectors) are common. There are no clear guidelines on what is the general public interest.

#### **We need to state our aims for marine reserves, the basic principles behind these and a general policy for achieving the aims.**

The relevant principles are outlined on the attached sheet, and a general policy that stems directly from these. When they consider the matter, the great majority of citizens do support the principles, which are fairly obvious. But stating these principles and aims in a formal policy will remove a lot of confusion and frustration. The policy does not provide any detail, make any specific promises, cost anything, or put any lines on a map. It will, however, make sensible decisions much easier. It will encourage marine reserve proposals that match the aims and provide clear reasons for declining those that do not.

Please consider the matter and make your views known. Our grandchildren will be glad that you spent a little time ensuring a more sensible management of their sea.

Yours sincerely

Bill Ballantine

## A STATEMENT OF AIMS, PRINCIPLES & POLICY FOR MARINE RESERVES

### AIMS:

Create a system of marine areas around New Zealand which have no deliberate extractions, are minimally-disturbed in other ways, but which are open to all for enjoyment, observation and study. (see Note 1 overleaf)

Include in this system examples of the whole range of marine habitats and species found in New Zealand seas. (see Note 2)

Ensure that the system of reserves is of a sufficient size and appropriate design to sustain itself in a natural form.

Optimise the direct benefits of the system to science, education, recreation, tourism, and the conservation at all levels (genetic, specific, habitat and ecosystem).

Optimise the indirect benefits to fishing and marine resource management.

### PRINCIPLES:

#### 1. REPRESENTATION

To maintain natural examples of the full range of New Zealand marine biota,

(a) each region with major differences in marine life must be represented and

(b) within each region, all obviously-different habitats must be represented. (see Note 3)

#### 2. REPLICATION

To allow scientifically-valid measurements, to provide for social needs, and to prevent single accidents destroying sole examples, some 'replicates' of each habitat in each region must be included in the reserve system.

#### 3. NETWORK DESIGN

Since most marine life has free-floating larvae (or other small reproductive and dispersal products) that drift a long way from their parents, single reserves are unlikely to be self-sustaining and the design of the system must be a network. The spacing of the reserves is as important as their size. (see Note 4)

#### 4. SUSTAINABILITY

The total area of the reserve system must be sufficient to sustain its natural character.

### POLICY (see Notes 5 and 6)

1. Adopt the aims and principles stated above as policy. Publicise this decision.

2. Instruct the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries to cooperate actively in achieving these aims, and to build them into Coastal and Fishing policies.

3. Set the Department of Conservation a *minimum* target of 10% *by area* of all marine habitats in all regions in 'no-take' reserves by the year 2002, to achieve direct benefits.

4. Encourage MoF to *propose* areas for reserve status, using advice from scientists and fishing interests, within the principles above, to achieve the indirect benefits.

5. Give MoF power to *increase* the amount of 'no-take' reserves (above 10%), if and when there are likely to be advantages to fishing. Such extensions will be taken into account when revising TACs (total allowable catches).

## NOTES:

1. Marine reserves must be 'no-take' and permanent. All other options are already available under standard fisheries management, and will continue to be available. Any fishing, for any reason, within marine reserves seriously confuses the issues and renders the whole exercise impractical. This was proved at the Poor Knights marine reserve, where the very limited fishing allowed has produced a situation which is politically embarrassing and virtually unsolvable.
2. Marine reserves must include examples of whatever habitats and life exist out there. The political/democratic process should, and will, decide which examples are included first and the rate of progress towards complete representation, but common sense and scientific principles make it clear that complete representation is the aim. Not just the pretty bits, the highly diverse bits or any other 'selection', but some of everything
3. Defining 'regions' (biogeographic) and 'habitats' (ecological) should not be, and need not be, a refined scientific exercise. Generally agreed (and relatively crude) distinctions are quite adequate in this case, provided decisions are applied sequentially: regions, habitats, replicates, and network design. Any fine or problematic distinctions at one level, become major and simple ones at the next one down.
4. On land, large reserves are generally best, but in the sea, a network arrangement of reserves is necessary to cope with 'dispersive' systems of reproduction. Although this is more trouble to begin with, once set up it has tremendous practical advantages. The drift of eggs, spores, larvae from one reserve to another ensures that intervening spaces are also supplied. A network of 'no-take' reserves is automatically supportive of exploited stocks. In the sea, 'no-take' reserves may 'lock-up' some adults, but they also act as 'stud farms' and 'seed banks'.
5. Most citizens, even objectors to a particular reserve, now believe in marine reserves 'in principle' to some degree. But there is a political and administrative vacuum when it comes to acting on this vague but general support. The reasons are largely historical 'accidents' that are no longer relevant. Nobody is wrong or at fault, but the situation does not make sense. Neither the Department of Conservation nor the Ministry of Fisheries have *any* clear and public instructions on what to do about marine reserves. Indeed existing instructions are negative. Present Fisheries and Coastal Policies *exclude* consideration of making more marine reserves.
6. The proposed policy is designed to be low risk (politically), clear about aims (socially), soundly-based (scientifically). It aims to get rid of the current administrative vacuum, and to promote action when this is generally agreed in principle (i.e. prevent local or sectional groups having veto powers or power of indefinite delay). It draws into the process fisheries interests, scientists and others, and encourages them to promote sectional advantage *where* this fits with agreed principles, but does not allow them to veto, delay or reduce the reserve aim below 10% of all habitats. It forces those who say 'we support the idea in principle' to put up real proposals or simply accept a representative 10%.