Hon Kate Wilkinson

Minister of Conservation

20 August 2010

Media Statement

Akaroa marine reserve proposal declined

Minister of Conservation Kate Wilkinson has today declined a proposal for a marine reserve in Akaroa Harbour, Canterbury, after nearly 15 years of deliberation.

"Local opinion has been polarised on this reserve right from the outset and it's been a delicate balancing act to gather all the facts and viewpoints and carefully consider each one.

"I have upheld the objection that declaring the area to be a marine reserve will adversely affect the existing use of the area for recreational fishing," Ms Wilkinson says.

"I am at least the sixth Minister of Conservation to have had this report appear on their desk and it is regrettable that it has dragged on for so long. This has not made the decision any easier by any means."

The application for a marine reserve near Dan Rogers Bluff in Akaroa was first presented in January 1996, by the Akaroa Harbour Marine Protection Society.

The main objections raised were around the effects of a reserve on recreational fishing, and the loss of customary fishing and mana to local tangata whenua.

The process was put on hold by the lodging of an alternative marine reserve application in Flea Bay and the application for a Taiapure in Akaroa Harbour.

Pōhatu Marine Reserve was gazetted in 1999 and the Akaroa Taiapure was established in 2006, but excluded the area proposed for the 'Dan Rogers' marine reserve.

This allowed the Department of Conservation to resume the statutory process of considering the marine reserve application. A second round of public consultation generated 77 submissions, of which 25 were objections.

"I appreciate that my decision will be a significant disappointment to the applicants who have put in many years of effort into this proposal. I must commend the Akaroa Harbour Marine Protection Society for the work they have put into raising the profile of Akaroa Harbour."

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