

**BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENT COURT
AT AUCKLAND
I MUA I TE KŌTI TAIAO O AOTEAROA
TĀMAKI MAKAURAU ROHE**

UNDER the Resource Management Act 1991
IN THE MATTER of appeals under Clause 14 of Schedule 1 of the Act
BETWEEN **BAY OF ISLANDS MARITIME PARK
INCORPORATED**

(ENV-2019-AKL-000117)

**ROYAL FOREST AND BIRD PROTECTION
SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND
INCORPORATED**

(ENV-2019-AKL-000127)

Appellants

AND **NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL**
Respondent

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE of JEROEN SIEBE JONGEJANS
(DIVE TOURISM)**

TOPIC 14 – MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

19 March 2021

Royal Forest and Bird Protection
Society of NZ Inc
Solicitor acting: PD Anderson
PO Box 2516
Christchurch 8140
p.anderson@forestandbird.org.nz

Bay of Islands Maritime Park
Counsel: Sally Gepp
Level 1
189 Hardy Street
Nelson 7010
sally@sallygepp.co.nz

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

1. My name is Jeroen Siebe Jongejans.
2. I am a Director of Dive! Tutukaka, which has operated for 35 years at Poor Knights Islands. My evidence describes my experiences diving at the Poor Knights Islands, in comparison to Mimiwhangata, and the implications for dive tourism in Northland.
3. I am providing this evidence on behalf of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc (“Forest & Bird”), Bay of Islands Maritime Park Inc (“BOIMP”) and Ngāti Kuta Hapū ki te Rawhiti (“Ngāti Kuta”).

EVIDENCE

4. I am an ex-Whangarei District Councillor, a Northland Conservation Board member, a director of Tourism Industry Aotearoa, a director of Northland (inc), and I have been involved in various tourism, promotions and regional economic development organisations in the last 2 decades, including serving as president of the NZ Underwater Association.
5. My business has been the Supreme NZ Tourism Business winner, as well as winning numerous regional, national and international business awards over the last 20 years.
6. I was responsible for creating two large artificial reefs on the Tutukaka Coast by sinking two ex-Navy ships, the HMNZS Tui (1999) and the HMNZS Waikato (2000).
7. I was also involved in the sinking of the HMNZS Canterbury and the HMNZS Wellington.
8. I was engaged by Tauranga District Council as an expert on recreational diver safety issues in relation to the RENA legal processes. I dived the RENA when it was an exclusion zone and witnessed prolific sealife, which was wiped out once fishing was allowed again.
9. Since the early 1980’s I have cruised the Northland Coast between Whangarei and the Bay of Islands. I have sailed, cruised, paddled Waka-ama, and been involved in the filming of a number of underwater documentaries with the Natural History NZ Unit, assisting with the making of “Wild South”, “Cities under the Sea” and “Masters of Inner Space”.
10. The initial protection at the Poor Knights Islands was in the form of a Marine Park with two zones. There was a large “protection” zone that allowed recreational fishing and a small no-take zone.
11. The pressure from recreational fishing on the Poor Knights Marine Reserve, prior to the total no-take protection it now enjoys, was significant. I saw how

pressure from fishing in the recreational fishing zone, and non-adherence to fishing restrictions in both the recreational fishing zone and the no-take zone threatened to reduce the environment's rich aquatic life. I saw little recovery in marine life there during this period.

12. From 1992 till 1998 I was very much involved in the process of increasing the no-take zone from 5% no-take to 100% no-take and the establishment of what is now known as the Poor Knights Islands Marine Reserve.
13. I saw little recovery of marine life and fish abundance at the Poor Knights until it became fully no-take.
14. As a Charter Tourism operator, I have witnessed the restoration and increase in both the diversity of fish life and fish numbers - particularly when I compare the Poor Knights Islands with other offshore Islands and our Northland Coast, including the Mimiwhangata Marine Park.
15. The Poor Knights Marine Reserve with its teeming marine life quickly became a place recreational and tourist divers flock to because they are guaranteed an interesting dive of flourishing kelp forest and sponges, and numerous fish that are relaxed around them because in the reserve they don't see divers as a threat.
16. Through our operation we send more than 15,000 people per year out to the Poor Knights. We operate 364 days of the year, collecting thousands of pictures and video footage that are shared all over the world, promoting New Zealand's natural wonders.
17. As an operation I estimate we have conducted over 250,000 dives, and contributed strongly and sustainably to the Tutukaka dive tourism economy.
18. The Tutukaka dive tourism operations add around \$10 million per annum to our region's economy.
19. My observations of marine life and ecosystems in the proposed Mimiwhangata Rahui Tapu have been irregular over a 30-year period, however they have been consistently very disappointing. I have seen absolutely no benefits for the marine life within the current Mimiwhangata Marine Park from the current form of protection, which has continued to allow recreational fishing.
20. Having dived the Northland East coast for over 35 years I have witnessed a large decline in fish abundance, an increase in kina barrens, a decrease in crayfish abundance, a reduction in birdlife and a significant decrease in the large schools of fish "work-ups" that used to be a feature on our coasts.
21. The Mimiwhangata area has not delivered any positive outcomes for the marine environment that I can see.

22. From a commercial tourism operator point of view there is no value in organising tours to Mimiwhangata - there is nothing for my customers to see.
23. The number of direct and indirect jobs generated by the Poor Knights Islands Marine reserve is considerable. The marine side of our operations in Tutukaka employ in excess of 80 FTE in the high season and 30 FTE in the low season. We also have 7 boats ranging in size from 12 to 24 metres in length, that all require considerable maintenance.
24. The hospitality, accommodation, shops, suppliers etc swell the number of jobs in Tutukaka to around 220.
25. The financial benefits of the ecotourism ventures in Tutukaka deliver in excess of \$10 million per annum to our region.
26. Divers like to go to new sites. Underwater tourism in Northland would expand if there was a "trail" of protected areas with flourishing marine life we could take them to. This would particularly attract international dive tourists who want to make the most of their trip to New Zealand.
27. I have included some photographs below that illustrate the key points I make in my evidence.

Jeroen Siebe Jongejans

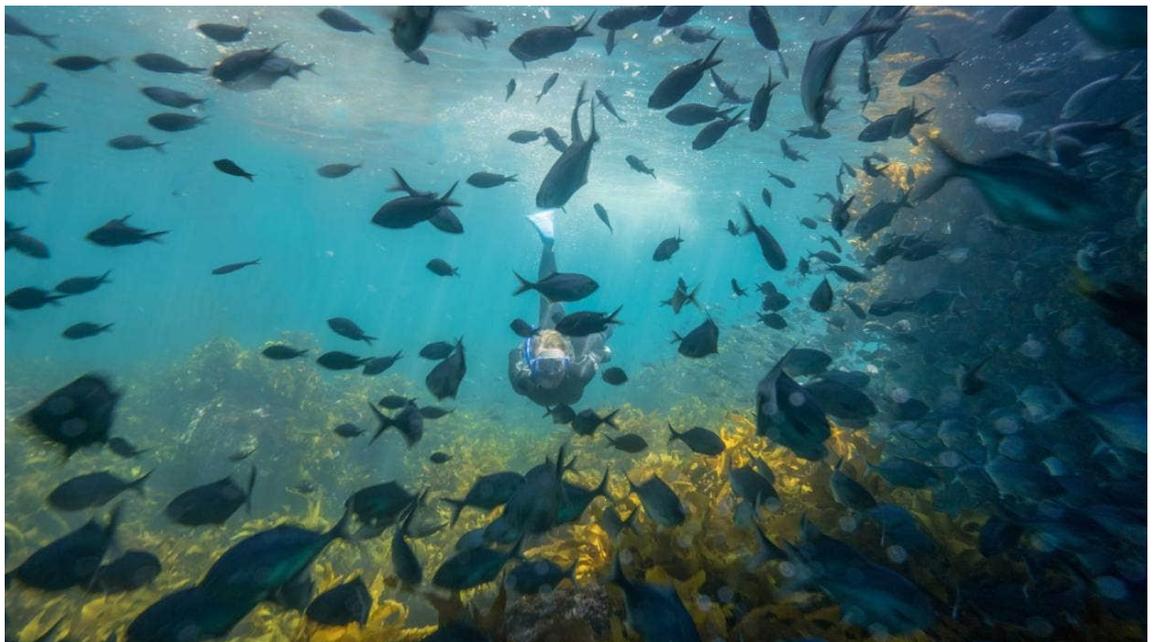
19 March 2021



When the underwater environment is protected it flourishes and tourists flock to see it. This boat is dedicated to taking tourists to snorkel in the Poor Knights Islands Marine Reserve.



Underwater tourists, whether they are novices or experienced divers, want to see abundant colour and fish. On the north-east coast of New Zealand I can only show them that inside no-take areas, like this one at the Poor Knights Marine Reserve.



Tourists are able to snorkel among relaxed fish above luxuriant kelp forest in the Poor Knights Islands Marine Reserve.



As in this photo in the Poor Knights Islands Marine Reserve, fish are relaxed about people swimming among them, because they don't see us as a predator within a no-take area.



Underwater tourism is a multi million dollar industry in the Poor Knights Islands Marine Reserve, and this industry could expand if there were more no-take dive sites on the Northland Coast to create a "dive trail" for these high-value tourists.