

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER

of the Proposed Porirua District Plan –
Hearing Stream 3

**Statement Of Evidence of Graeme La Cock on Behalf of The Director-
General of Conservation**

19 November 2021

Department of Conservation
P O Box 10 420, WELLINGTON 6011

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INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Graeme Dennis La Cock.
2. I have been employed at the Department of Conservation (DOC) for 24 years.
3. I have held my current role as a Technical Advisor Ecology for the past nine years. Previously I was a Technical Support Officer (Flora) in DOC's Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki Conservancy for 15 years.
4. Before working for DOC I worked in South Africa for 10 years as a scientist for a conservation agency, and for four years as a technician with an ornithological institute, concentrating on seabird research.
5. I have a BSc, BSc Honours and MSc from Rhodes University, South Africa. I have authored or co-authored 20 publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals.
6. I am a trustee of the Coastal Restoration Trust of New Zealand, and have 35 years' experience in coastal management in New Zealand and South Africa.
7. I have presented evidence on coastal matters on several regional and district plans, including Waikato, Kapiti Coast, Horizons and Horowhenua. I have provided technical advice for DOC on resource consent applications, including sand mining, dune management plans, bunds, coastal roads and walkways.
8. I have also presented general biodiversity evidence on several regional and district plans and regional pest management strategies, including on Hearing Stream 2 of this proposed plan. I have participated as an expert witness in Environment Court mediation.
9. Although this evidence is not prepared for an Environment Court hearing, I confirm that I have read and comply with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses (set out in the Environment Court's Consolidated Practice Note, 2014).

10. This evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on what I have been told by another person. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

11. I have been asked to give evidence concerning coastal management in the Porirua District as it relates to the Proposed Porirua District Plan (PPDP) – in particular rule CE-R5: Seeking checks and balances for the proposed Permitted status for soft engineering works undertaken by a statutory agency or their nominated contractor.

INTRODUCTION

12. I have read the s 42A report relating to the Coastal Environment, Part 3.15 “Hard and soft engineering measures”. I support the analysis and findings in that part of the report, except for rule CE-R5.

CE-R5. CHECKS AND BALANCES ON ACTIVITIES IN DUNES

13. The Director General of Conservation had sought to add checks and balances either by way of permitted activity conditions or controlled activity status to address the potential for adverse effects on dune systems, coastal processes, risk transfer, biodiversity values etc. for CE-R5.

14. Mr McDonnell recommends rejecting this, retaining Permitted activity status for CE-R5: Soft engineering coastal hazard mitigation works undertaken by a Statutory Agency or their nominated contractor or agent in all the Hazard Areas of the Coastal Hazard Overlays.

15. Coastal management requires a very good understanding of coastal processes, and is more complex than standard rehabilitation planting of forests or riparian margins.

16. Many mistakes have been made by well-meaning groups and agencies.

Muriwai Beach example

17. It took many attempts over several years to finally find a solution to a poorly situated car park at the southern end of Muriwai Beach. In this case, it required carefully designed soft protection measures in conjunction with managed retreat.
18. The attached link to a presentation given at the Coastal Restoration Trust's conference in Warkworth in 2019 by Matthew McNeil, an Auckland Council Senior Coastal Specialist, clearly demonstrates the complexity of the work at the Muriwai Beach car park.

https://www.coastalrestorationtrust.org.nz/site/assets/files/1963/2019_03_matthew_mcneil_presentation.pdf

19. I understand that the Muriwai example is of a scale and complexity which means it would need resource consent.
20. I agree that the earthworks provisions would pick up on some aspects of the work at Muriwai, but I don't believe earthworks provisions will cover the coastal geomorphology questions of expected sea level rise, the required profile, where to place the toe of the dune etc. I believe this scenario demonstrates the importance of proper planning with oversight by a qualified coastal management expert.

Mangawhai Spit example

21. I was once approached to assess an application to top-dress dying pingao on Mangawhai Spit north of Auckland. Pingao needs a supply of fresh sand to survive. The community group had erected sand fences to trap all the sand coming onto the spit, thereby starving the pingao of a fresh sand supply. Nearby pingao where sand had been allowed to blow was thriving.
22. I have used this example to demonstrate that well-meaning attempts at management can fail if coastal processes and the requirements of sand-binding vegetation are misunderstood

Conclusion

23. I believe a simple condition, for example, requiring any proposed soft engineering coastal management work to be approved by a coastal management expert, would result in a better, safer product. Less onerous requirements such as supervision by or consultation with a qualified

coastal management expert are less preferable, but would also be an improvement on the current rule.

24. Such a condition would prevent costly financial, social and environmental mistakes from being made.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G La Cock', written in a cursive style.

Graeme La Cock

19 November 2021