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Coromandel Scallop restoration group
c/o LegaSea
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2 December 2020

Re: Coromandel Scallop Restoration and Sustainability Plan.

Tēnā koe e te Minita,

Tenei he mihi nui kia koe i runga i tenei reta hiahia I pa ana ki te kaitiakitanga o tatou rohe Moana o Ngāti Hei, no reira.

The purpose of this letter is to seek your support for action to be taken to address the collective concerns regarding the depleted state of the scallop beds around the Coromandel Peninsula, and in particular on the eastern seaboard including Opito and Kūaotunu Bays. We have watched these scallop beds diminish in size and abundance over the years and, until very recently, our attempts to engage Fisheries New Zealand with our concerns have been unsuccessful. After considering all the options we are now taking the bold step of initiating community led conservation measures and seek your support.

We are writing to you as part of a wide group of community organisations including Ngāti Hei, mana whenua and mana moana of Te Whanganui O Hei (Mercury Bay/Opito and Kūaotunu, Matarangi and Whangapoua), which also includes the offshore island groups of Ahuahu (Great Mercury Islands including Repanga (Cuvier Island) Ohinau Island group and the Alderman Island Group on the eastern Coromandel from Whangapoua to Opoutere.

Other groups participating in the discussions include the Opito Bay Ratepayers Association, Kūaotunu Ratepayers Association, New Zealand Underwater Association, New Zealand Sport Fishing Council, Tairua-Pauanui Sports Fishing Club, Mercury Bay Game Fishing Club, Matarangi Boat & Fishing Club, Whangamata Ocean Sports Club and LegaSea. Our steering committee is made up of representatives from some of these organisations.

Unconstrained commercial fishing combined with the ongoing use of the Victorian Box Dredge as the harvest method of choice has seen the state of the seafloor altered. Consequently, the scallop populations have declined. Coastal Coromandel communities are reporting that local scallop beds are depleted. The remaining productive areas are experiencing increased concentration of effort by scallop fishers. All up we feel this is a major environmental issue.

Scallops are critical to the marine ecosystem. Mismanagement of the scallop population has made it increasingly hard to collect and share kaimoana with our families and friends. Also, as the scallops have become less abundant so too has the commercial fleet, which has dwindled from a peak of 23 boats to four this season.

The mismanagement of our marine resources is having detrimental environmental, social and economic impacts on our Coromandel communities. We are deeply concerned that in the absence of any meaningful action scarcity will create increasing animosity between competing interests in the scallop fishery. The downside risk for you and the Coromandel community is that views will become entrenched and there will be resistance to adjusting behaviours in the future.

After talking with Fisheries New Zealand recently we understand a proposal to survey scallop abundance in the Coromandel scallop fishery is under development. If approved, the survey is expected to be completed mid-2021, with no results expected before 2022. Collectively we have decided to take a proactive approach. We have committed to work together to ensure that the health of our marine environment is prioritised.

In conjunction with Ngāti Hei and in order to serve our communities' interests we have planned the following initiatives –

1. A snapshot survey of scallop abundance in Opito Bay over the summer of 2020-21.
2. A voluntary no-take of scallops by all harvesters over the summer of 2020-21.
3. Community support for Ngāti Hei to implement a rāhui under Fisheries Act 1996 and/or the Fisheries (Kaimoana Customary Fishing) Regulations 1998.

A proactive approach to the restoration and long-term sustainability of scallops around the Coromandel must respect and benefit tangata whenua. There is much we can all learn by applying mātauranga Māori, merging traditional knowledge and histories of Te Taiao, alongside western academic science disciplines and standards throughout this entire process. We trust you will support us in elevating broader public understanding and acceptance of mātauranga Māori, as Aotearoa's primary indigenous science will be important in aiding both rāhui awareness and the successful implementation of long term management measures for sustaining scallops.

As the new Minister of Oceans and Fisheries we seek your support for these initiatives by:

1. Directing Fisheries New Zealand to acknowledge these concerns and support our efforts.
2. Appointing a representative to engage with the Coromandel Scallop Restoration and Sustainability Plan steering committee.
3. Providing Ngāti Hei with the necessary support to implement a rāhui.

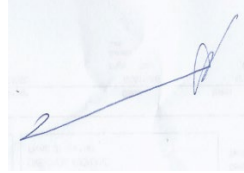
Thank you in anticipation of a positive response. Our contact for any correspondence or queries is Trish Rea trish@legasea.co.nz.

Kia mau te haumanu nga taonga o Tangaroa – To respect and restore the treasures of Tangaroa.

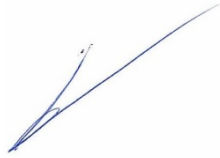
Ngā mihi,

J J F Davis

Joe Davis, Kaumatua, Ngāti Hei.



Chris Severne, Chair, Opito Bay Ratepayers Association.



Andy Stewart, Executive, New Zealand Underwater.



Bob Gutsell, President, New Zealand Sport Fishing Council.



Sam Woolford, Project Lead, LegaSea.