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Annual Report – Friends of Taputeranga Marine Reserve Trust – September 2015

I am pleased to report continued progress on quite a wide array of projects which fit within our mandate as a Trust. The highlights of that work are:

- **Snorkel Trail** – The ongoing maintenance of the buoy system marking the boundaries of the Trail have again proved to be challenging, due for the most part to the increase in number and magnitude of southerly sea conditions, storms or swells which have proved equally problematic for residents bordering the reserve as well as the City Council's road and seawall maintenance resources. It has been apparent that the design of the buoy and anchoring system has had to be reviewed in order to address weak points and remove any metal parts that would prove vulnerable to corrosion. We are grateful to Daniel McNaughton, VUCCEL, who has been able to apply his experience, keep a close eye on the buoys and repair and replace when needed this last winter. I believe that we will need to keep under review whether or not to lift the buoys or otherwise place them in some sort of holding format during winters as there is every reason to expect these sea conditions and weather patterns to continue. The Trail, as an attraction for young and older snorkelers continues to receive large numbers of visitors in summer months.
- **PPP** – The Painted Pavement Project, as we call it, emerged from a belief that additional, novel signage was needed in order to reinforce the DOC signs letting the community know that the marine reserve exists, that its marine life is to be fully protected and to give an impression of the dimensions of the reserve. Sophie Mormede and Jen Howe gave us good initial ideas in planning and execution of the project, which has been to paint using stencils an arrow every 0.5 km along the seaward side of the footpaths bordering the reserve, from Princess Bay through 4.5+ km to the western boundary past the end of Owhiro Bay Parade. At each arrow the distance to each of the boundaries is marked, including to the distance out to sea to

the southern boundary from each point. In addition a stencilled sea creature is placed approx. at 50 m intervals between the arrows. The whole PPP results in a distance marker for runners and walkers to mark their efforts, but more particularly, additional reminders that the marine reserve exists and is to be respected as 'no take'. Jen Howe has undertaken the great bulk of the work to design and prepare stencils, research paints, seek WCC encroachment licencing (with Ann McCrone) and to carry out the painting helped by a crew of willing weekend and weekday painters. The result will be almost 100 stencilled arrows and 'critter' pictures; some 50% + have been completed as of the end of October. It is worth stating that those doing the work have had very fulsome support and approval from those using the footpaths bordering the South Coast at the reserve while the painting continued.

- **Coast Watch** – In addition to making the community more aware of the reserve through PPP, the Friends, late in 2014, developed a Taputeranga Coast Watch group to assist DOC in compliance work. The concept stemmed from a need to mobilise the community better to report incidents at the reserve that are considered to be poaching, calling the DOC HOTline and using DOC reporting forms as a guide as to the sort of information that would be useful in the event that prosecutions are considered. The main elements of the Coast Watch are Watchers – people motivated to be especially vigilant and active in reporting incidents of alleged poaching, Boundary Walkers – people prepared to don Coast Watch shirts and logos and walk the coastal edge, engaging with marine reserve users and encouraging good practices in care for shoreline and rock pool life forms, and act as a 'walking billboard' reminder of the reserves nature and extent. Finally, a Callout Crew – a few people who, when called upon by DOC, may attend reported incidents and take more specific information relevant to prosecutions.

The emphasis is on public safety, so that the Coast Watchers are not encouraged to approach poachers, but rather simply observe and report. It is considered that the Coast Watch had a good initial year, especially in the summer when use of the reserve margins and sea area is at its greatest. We are also grateful for the increased activity of the DOC Reserve Ranger, Dave Wrightson, who gave plenty of his own time as well DOC's to complement Coast Watch activity. For whatever reason, and statistics are difficult to objectively gather, poaching activity was kept at a low level, with many apparent incidents nipped in the bud. Many thanks to DOC for support and encouragement that is ongoing, but especially to all of the willing volunteer Coast Watchers.

- **Marine Reserve Anniversary Week** – We have been assisted greatly by the active involvement of Dave Drane, as both a Trust Board Member and through Dive Wellington, in bringing some new dimensions to the work of the Friends. Dave and Paula Drane volunteered the proceeds of a Dive Wellington fishing event to the Friends, and in the process introduced the Friends group to the support which the reserve gets from business clients and scuba divers, as conservationists and/or as

active fishers beyond the margins of the reserve. Many divers express their support for the recovery of the reserve which they are able to appreciate from personal experience looking inside the reserve, but also because of the greater reliability of being able to pursue and gather fish spilling over outside of the reserve.

Dave also developed a project so that the marine reserve's 'annual 'birthday' of its establishment in September 2008 will be marked by a week of events and activities. This year the events were dogged with bad weather and had to be curtailed.

Nevertheless an evening at The Surf Club to highlight post graduate research based on the marine reserve was a success. The Trust Board intends to run this week as an annual event, gathering momentum towards the 10th anniversary of the reserve.

- **Advocacy** – Led especially by Sophie Mormede, the Trust has made submissions on a number of plans and policies which affect the marine reserve or the wider marine environments, as well as involvement within wider marine and freshwater advocacy groups. We were pleased to note that, as a result of our written and oral submissions (and those of other marine-friendly NGO's) the WCC Biodiversity Plan was revised to make more specific provision for marine protection. We were also able to submit to the WCC Long Term Plan, and to make a considered submission to the Government's call for comments on the matter of Climate Change Emissions Targets. We believe that the last of these is a matter of considerable urgency and importance, though sadly submissions met with insufficient regard for informed citizen group and science concerns. Like so many elements of modern governance climate change is actually far too important to leave to politicians to resolve on a national or international basis! That way lies inevitable compromise, pandering to political interest groups, dissembling and inadequate real action.
- **EMR Support** – In approaching support for education in marine reserve benefits and values the Friends have not seen any initial need to develop new projects when the Experiencing Marine Reserves activity is so well-established and operating in the Wellington region. Therefore, the Friends Trust Board has opted to provide funding support to allow an extension of EMR to additional schools and classes over and above that provided by direct schools and existing base funding. The Trust has asked that its funding for education, or funds obtained through the Trust, be directed to schools/classes that would not otherwise have had the opportunity to take part for lack of their own resources. We are more than pleased to look to extend that support again in 2016. The appreciation of the values of the marine reserve gained and the students' enthusiasm is uplifting!

We acknowledge the professionalism of Zoe Studd, Community Outreach Programmes Manager, and the support provided by Julian Hodge (Friends Trustee) and the Island Bay Marine Education Center, in the successful delivery of these programmes. Moreover, the Trust is looking to assist in the extension of education

and research opportunities for secondary school students to gain valuable skills and experience in marine science projects within their capabilities in future years.

In addition to these main, ongoing project areas the Trust has assisted or taken part in other areas, including Seaweek (through support for IBMEC Community Snorkel events), the Island Bay Festival, the review of DOC's monitoring approach in marine reserves (followed by a re-monitoring at Taputeranga), our website and newsletters, our annual involvement as a small part of the South Coast Clean Up (thanks for the whole project to Helen Kettles), and pursuit of funding for various projects.

Acknowledgements

The Trust has experienced continuing good relationships with The Department of Conservation. Our thanks to Matt Barnett who is our chief liaison with DOC, and through him, other staff who relate to our work. We also acknowledge the important work of Geoff Owen and DOC's Compliance team, including the hard work and dedication of Dave Wrightson who is the Reserve Ranger for Taputeranga. We find that we are able to be straightforward with DOC when pressing for policies, support or resources, without falling out. Ultimately it is apparent to those who understand Government budgets that funding is tight and Conservation not seen in as favourable light by the current administration as it should be and has been in the past.

Equally, our interactions with WCC lie on an even keel, with enthusiastic support given from departments with a natural areas focus, and professional treatment where licencing is concerned. We find the Council receptive to the concept of the marine reserve as a community asset, and on a par with Zealandia and Matiu Somes within the region. Its value to Wellingtonians in both conservation and economic terms will continue to be enhanced as the reserve recovers. It has singular features – the only marine reserve at a capital city in the world – and its sheer accessibility for users along the South Coast, provide opportunities for the City and the region that are able to be promoted. How good it would be to see a WCC sign on The Esplanade that says: “**Taputeranga – Our Capital Marine Reserve**”!

Thanks to the experienced work of Colin Ryder, the Trust has been able to compete for contestable funds to support its work. We acknowledge valuable contributions from the Wellington Airport Company, Lion Foundation and the Wellington Community Trust over the 2014 and 2015 years. Thanks also to Dave and Paula Drane, and to Sam Wild for significant funding opportunities.

Trust Board

The current Trust Board comprises Murray Hosking, Colin Ryder, Ann McCrone, Dave Drane, Jen Howe, Sophie Mormede, Steve Meads, and Julian Hodge. We were sad to farewell both Dr Malcolm Francis and Crissy Meads in 2014, but Dave Drane joined in that year. We regard Malcolm as an Honourable Associate, and know that his expertise may be called upon when sorely needed. The Board has spent some time in recruiting Board members to provide a full representation of skills and experience, and new Trustee appointments are imminent. Murray Hosking resigned his position as Chair in September 2015, to be replaced by Colin

Ryder, the only other foundation Trust Board member and our current Treasurer. The Trust is well served to continue under Colin's chairmanship, given his wide experience as an active conservationist, member of the original South Coast Coalition (which worked hard and long to bring the Marine Reserve into being), and widely experienced member of Trusts and bodies with similar objectives in the Wellington region.

Final Note

As outgoing Chair I know that the Trust is in good hands, a sound financial position and a very satisfactory array of skills and knowledge to fit the mandate of the Trust. Ann has given valuable service as Secretary, as well as providing a wealth of material to be called upon for the Newsletter and website. I am happy to continue as a Trust Board member 'backbencher' at the pleasure of the Board. I am grateful that Colin has been able to provide experienced continuity in the Chair, and would like to thank Trust Board members for the support that I have enjoyed during the past 2 years in the Chair.

There are many aspects of the Taputeranga Marine Reserve Trust which I believe are not only positive for the reserve but innovative and worthy of consideration at other reserves. The community nature of the Trust is a useful model for others, demonstrating what can be accomplished by a Board and membership drawing widely on marine science, Government management and administration, economic value from associated clubs and business, education, recreation and compliance. Taputeranga, as has been said, is a very accessible marine reserve with a Capital city at its edge. It presents a compliance challenge which will only grow. I commend to the Board, members and associates of the Trust that this activity requires a full measure of attention so that the benefits and values of the marine reserve can be fully appreciated and enjoyed.

Murray Hosking

Chair to 30 September 2015