

Te Korowai o Te Tai o Marokura

A fresh look at fisheries management by communities

Fisheries management is a dynamic and often challenging pursuit. Too often, fisheries managers find that industry and recreational users are way ahead of them — the managers “shut the stable door” only to find that the “horse has bolted”. To avoid this “us and them” scenario, new ways need to be found to ensure that our marine environment is able to support the needs of present and future generations.

Recommendation 2 of the 2003 review of the Nelson/SPC Fisheries Training Course asked that the Nelson component of the course be “re-aligned more towards sustainable management and industry development...” Following on from this recommendation, several new topics were introduced: fisheries science, aquaculture, Pacific fisheries, fisheries management, and observer workshop. Delivery of these new topics began in 2004, and 2013 will be the fifth year in which they have been an integral part of the course.

In the current Nelson course structure, seven days have been set aside for the fisheries management module, and in 2012 a new study focus was introduced. The 2012 group of 11 students, accompanied by Viliami Langi and Alec Woods, travelled to the seaside tourist town of Kaikoura, New Zealand.

A new conservation strategy

The aim of the visit was to study the ecological system, that is Te Tai o Marokura — the Kaikoura marine environment. It has taken the Kaikoura community seven years to develop this strategy. In this endeavour, they have been helped by experts from throughout New Zealand and guided by a similar strategy developed several years earlier by the Fiordland Marine Guardians.

In essence, the document is a challenge to government and is, in effect, the community saying to government that, acting as a community, it wants to develop its own strategy to manage the future well being of the Kaikoura marine environment. This may require special legislation, and the government is presently considering the implications of this strategy (Te Korowai).



2012 Nelson course students and Viliami Langi (left) at the Takahanga marae, Kaikoura. The carvings behind them are by Cliff Whiting.

The vision

The vision of Te Korowai can be summarised as:

By perpetuating the mauri and wairua of Te Tai o Marokura

The community act as kaitiaki of Tangaroa's taonga

To achieve a flourishing, rich and healthy environment

Where opportunities abound

To sustain the needs of present and future generation

The key to realising this vision has been a philosophy of “gifts and gains”. Each stakeholder group, such as commercial fishers, tourism operators, *tangata whenua*, recreational fishers and local residents, has gifted concessions — that is, given something up to Tangaroa — to sustain the integrity of the whole resource for the future.

The vision has four key outcomes:

- Sustaining customary practices
- Protecting our treasures
- Fishing for abundance
- Living sustainably

“Sustaining customary practices” means that the traditional fishing areas of Ngati Kuri are restored and maintained and that traditional knowledge (*matauranga*) and customs (*tikanga*) are used to protect the fisheries of Te Tai o Marokura. The overall approach is to use the tools provided by the government, following the treaty settlement on fisheries. *Tangata whenua* will have control over key food baskets through the mechanisms of *mataitai* and *taiapure*. Reserve managers will be assisted by customary and scientific baseline surveys in order to monitor the health of both *mataitai* and *taiapure*.

“Protecting our treasures” will be achieved by giving special status to unique areas, such as through a range of protection measures, including World Heritage status, a marine mammal sanctuary, local codes of practice for commercial fishers, a marine reserve and several *rahui* (temporarily closed areas).

“Fishing for abundance” means that it is okay to fish but that managing fishing effort needs to be done at a local level. The social and ecological objectives of the community must be integrated with the use of national tools for fisheries management. The rules on commercial, cultural and recreational harvests will have to conform to a local consensus so that resultant decisions are fair to all sectors. Fishing for abundance will require better enforcement and education of fishers, local codes of practice, a greater level of research and monitoring of local fisheries, local recreational fishing rules, and a charter fisher's code of practice.

“Living sustainably” will require integrated land and water planning through resource management processes that are under local control. The objective is to sustain and enhance the quality of the Kaikoura coastal and marine environment. This will include a public access and highway management plan for the Kaikoura coast and effective marine biosecurity measures for the area.

Cross-cutting actions to achieve outcomes

There are four broad actions that cut across and support these outcomes.

1. **Engaging understanding** is fundamental to improving the way in which people interact with their environment. It is vital that the community is informed or educated about the strategy in a way that is both relevant and understandable. Sources of traditional, local and scientific knowledge will need to be sustained and enhanced. By directly engaging with key groups, a sense of ownership and *kaitiakitanga* will be promoted.
2. **Governance** must be effective and locally led. The strategy seeks neither independence from government nor to usurp statutory functions for decision-making and enforcement. Rather, it is about local communities taking initiative and developing a regional view of things. The role of Te Korowai will need statutory recognition so that the suite of legal instruments identified in the strategy can be made to work effectively. Ongoing funding will need to be secured to support the strategy's implementation.
3. **Compliance** with the outcomes of the strategy will involve developing a cultural and social expectation that supports the vision. Implementation will also require enforcement where legal rights and obligations are transgressed. Enforcement would still remain with the relevant agencies, and code-compliant companies would use Te Korowai-endorsed branding.
4. **Monitoring and review** will be necessary so that the strategy is kept up to date and effective. It will be important to identify and monitor key indicators such as growth in fish size or numbers and the effectiveness and health of reserves and sanctuaries. Where necessary, management will need to adapt or change direction.

A *korowai* is a cloak worn by a chiefly person and is laid over something to ensure its care and protection. In this instance, that “something” is the coastal marine area of Marokura. The community is weaving this *korowai* together.

We believe that the efforts of the Kaikoura community in achieving their vision are worthy of study. There is much here that is relevant to any coastal community that depends on the marine environment to sustain it, and it is hoped that visiting Pacific Island fisheries officers will see developments here that are relevant to their own countries.

The strategy is still evolving and there are hurdles to overcome, many as yet unknown. The value in visiting Kaikoura is to have the chance to experience this unique environment and to begin to understand the importance the community sees in perpetuating the *mauri* and *wairua* of Te tai o Marokura.

For more information:

Alec Woods

Contractor and Course Coordinator, NMIT
(Alec.Woods@nmit.ac.nz)

Viliani Langi

Pacific Islands Liaison Officer, NMIT
(Viliani.Langi@cawthron.org.nz)

Some definitions

Mataitai is a traditional fishing ground established under the Fisheries (South Island Customary Fishing) Regulations 1999, giving local Maori the right to sustainably manage the fisheries resources in that reserve (usually a customary food gathering site). Generally speaking, commercial fishing is excluded from such areas.

Taiapure identifies an area of estuarine or coastal water that is of special significance to an *iwi* or *hapu* (tribe or subtribe) as a source of food or for spiritual or cultural reasons. The management committee is nominated by local Maori and will be drawn from all stakeholders. This committee has the power to recommend regulations that allow *taiapure* to function according to custom.

Kaitiakitanga is the exercise of guardianship by *tangata whenua* (local Maori) of an area in accordance with *tikanga Maori* (Maori customs).

Mauri is the life force, in this case, of the Kaikoura coast, which binds its physical and spiritual elements, generating and upholding all life.

Wairua is the spirit of the living system (i.e. the Kaikoura coast). “The Coast” embodies an holistic “mountains-to-sea” philosophy or *ki utaki tai*.