

Friday 23rd April 2010

Local Tikanga and Perspectives

Lady Chapman, Naumai

Lady Chapman was disappointed to have missed most of the earlier korero [discussion] because she had been involved in preparing the kai [food] for the hui. She was also saddened that they were not able to host the Accord at Naumai Marae, but due to a tangi this hui moved to Oturei. Local tikanga [practice] dictated that a hui would make way for a tangi, out of respect to the person who had passed away and their whanau.

After amusing everyone with several stories Lady went on to describe her early memories of families living beside the Wairoa River and being sustained by the kaimoana [seafood] available. Lady's large family relied on the kaimoana, as did most of the locals. She recalled one family had 22 children, but many had between 10 and 15.

Mullet, flounder and eel were prolific when she was a youngster. These were now less abundant and the locals were very concerned about their ability to teach their mokopuna [grandchildren] how to sustain the land. There were serious concerns about the amount of run-off from the land that was entering the waterways and upsetting the local ecology.

There were consequences for the health and well-being of the harbour if chemicals were applied to the land. Frogs and tadpoles had virtually disappeared from the streams so it was no surprise there was an increase in mosquito numbers. It was hugely disturbing to witness several years ago the aerial bombardment to counter the Ross River virus in the Kaipara. If there were enough frogs around they could regulate the numbers of flying insects without the need for chemicals.

Amongst all the laughter and talking throughout the hui it was notable that Judah's voice was not being heard. Although they had had their differences, the locals had huge respect for Judah and his ability to bring people together for the good of everyone.

It was up to people at the grassroots to ensure the wellness of the land and waterways. Lady was pleased the Hokianga Accord was fighting to maintain healthy fish numbers and encouraged everyone to continue that work.

MFish – Accord Relationship

Hui discussion

It was notable that once again the Ministry of Fisheries had arrived to present broad, non-specific policy statements and then left as quickly as possible. Despite earlier assurances about supporting the Hokianga Accord the Ministry had failed to provide meaningful support and koha for the hui. This was disappointing for the Accord and Oturei Marae. But MFish's behaviour was consistent with previous hui.

It was everyone's right to know how MFish are applying the Fisheries Act. If the Ministry is having problems in giving effect to certain parts of the Act, they ought to provide adequate information and then ask people who care, to determine the best way to achieve the optimum outcome.

For example, if sitting a driver's licence all the material is provided, people are expected to learn the basics and then be tested for the knowledge and skill. In contrast, MFish seem to be hiding behind the legislation, presenting policies that can only loosely relate to the legislation and then expect people to accept their interpretation of the law. This was not good enough.

It was incumbent on the Hokianga Accord to be honest enough and point out to MFish where they are going wrong. There was enough experience amongst the forum's participants to try and offer direction to the Ministry so that their actions are of more benefit to the wider community.

There was an opportunity to write to the Ministry and point out the issues and offer to work with them to achieve better outcomes for everyone.

Alternatively, given the ongoing sometime fractious nature of the relationship maybe it was time to write to the Minister directly. Concurrent with that would be having the Accord chairperson or Iwi leaders, Sonny Tau and Naida Glavish, to deal directly with the Minister, Phil Heatley.

MFish could not plead ignorance of what the Hokianga Accord is trying to achieve. Ministry personnel have attended enough hui, received plenty of correspondence and have had their Pou Hononga and Pou Takawaenga working with iwi and hapu within Ngapuhi and Ngati Whatua for some years now.

MFish still seem to struggle with the inclusive approach that the Accord has taken in management terms. The model of iwi commercial and non-commercial, hapu, environmental and amateur fishing interests working together to achieve a common outcome was successful. It was disappointing MFish were not encouraging similar behaviour around the country. Having all interests in a region working collectively would make the Ministry's job much simpler in the medium to long-term.

MFish seemed intent on developing Iwi Fisheries Plans because that is what they have agreed will occur and have set aside funding to achieve those plans. The Hokianga Accord was more interested in developing a plan that encompassed broader interests of the community as well as iwi and hapu aspirations.

The various organisations within the Hokianga Accord had worked hard to find areas of common interest, a similar approach could be taken with the Ministry and Minister given that they have to work within the constraints of the bureaucracy.

Whatever strategy was agreed it was important to include Ben Dalton in the mix. This was his first Hokianga Accord hui and he clearly stated that he is seeking to achieve the best outcome for Maori. This offer needed to be given more consideration, irrespective if an approach is made to either the Minister or Ministry.

It was agreed that the relationship between the Accord and MFish needed to be re-evaluated because it had been dysfunctional from the start. In 2005 months of effort went into developing a Kaupapa Whakahaere (Memorandum of Understanding). MFish Deputy CEO Stan Crothers, Terry Lynch and other senior officials were involved in that initiative.

That Kaupapa Whakahaere had lapsed and it was debatable whether the new people in MFish were familiar with the ins and outs of the Fisheries Act 1996. To achieve the best outcome from a re-evaluation of the relationship it was critical the Accord determines its own wants and needs before expecting MFish to deliver any more than they have over the past five years.

Ideally key personnel from each organisation would meet as the Hokianga Accord Working Group, to thrash out a clear intention statement, a strategy to achieve that outcome and ways to positively engage with Ben, the Ministry and Minister.

The More Fish in the Water II Strategy¹² delivered to the Minister last year during the Fisheries 2030 discussions describes the medium to long-term goals. Initially the Accord needs to decide on the immediate priorities:

- ⇒ Desirable policies and outcomes; and
- ⇒ The mechanics, from within the Fisheries Act, required to deliver those policies and outcomes.

¹² http://www.option4.co.nz/Fisheries_Mgmt/documents/More_fish_in_the_water_2.pdf
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These decisions can then be delivered at a meeting of the Minister, Ben Dalton and the Hokianga Accord Working Group. It needs to be clear that achieving these outcomes will ultimately reflect well on the Minister and his Ministry.

Another approach is to simply fold the More Fish in the Water II Strategy into the MFish 2030 document. (Appendix Five). Given the broadness of the MFish statements in their final 2030 policy this can be achieved by fitting the Alliance strategy statements under each MFish heading. This way a single document is developed that encompasses both views.

The Hokianga Accord already has its own policies and long-term vision, as described in the More Fish in the Water II Strategy. There are fundamental principles that the Hokianga Accord ought to stick by, with or without immediate support from the Ministry. The mechanics of how and when things occur requires Ministry willingness.

The Minister on the other hand is responsible at a political level, so a short checklist of four or five issues needs to be developed and given to the Minister to deliver by the next election, in October/November 2011. Those issues did not necessarily need to be all 2030-focused, but it needs to be clear that these are the points that the Accord and its constituent organisations will use to measure the Minister's success.

The priority list of desirable policies, outcomes and mechanics to achieve those things could form the basis of a combined Community Fisheries Plan as opposed to an Iwi Fisheries Plan. This could be a "starter" to discuss with Ben Dalton, as the person responsible for implementing the Treaty Strategy and Iwi Fisheries Plans.

Kelvin Davis' arrival

Kelvin Davis [Ngati Manu] is a Labour Party List MP and Associate Spokesperson on Maori Affairs. Kelvin arrived during intense discussions on how the Hokianga Accord ought to proceed in its relationship with the Minister and Ministry of Fisheries.

It was clarified that the mandated representatives of a variety of iwi, hapu, environmental and amateur fishing organisations regularly attended the Hokianga Accord hui. Some of those people had already left Otarei to attend other hui.

People still at Otarei, or those who had recently left, included representatives from Te Runanga A Iwi O Ngapuhi, Te Runanga o Ngati Whatua, Te Runanga-a-Iwi O Ngati Kahu, Greenpeace, Environment and Conservation Organisations of Aotearoa New Zealand (ECO), NZ Sport Fishing, option4, Guardians of the Sea Charitable Trust and Te Korowai o Te Tai o Marokura Kaikoura. Forest & Bird and Guardians of Hawke Bay Fisheries representatives had sent their apologies.

A quick recap was given, for Kelvin's benefit, outlining the stalemate regarding Ministerial approval for Te Puna Mataitai and the effort made by the late Judah Heihei and his team of kaitiaki to achieve their aspirations for more abundant fisheries in the northern Bay of Islands.

Kelvin apologised for arriving late and advised he had to leave early to attend a meeting in Whangarei. He was keen to stay informed of the Accord's progress and eager to attend future forum hui. Fishing was an integral part of Maori life and it was very important to maintain that legacy for our mokopuna [descendants].