



**ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION ORGANISATIONS OF NZ
INC.**

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Department of Conservation
Hamilton Service Centre
Private Bag 3072
Hamilton 3240

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission on Proposed Aotea Conservation Park

1.0 Introduction

The Environment and Conservation Organisations of NZ (ECO) is the national alliance of 55 groups with a concern for the environment. We were established in 1972 and have had a long involvement with conservation law and implementation.

This submission has been prepared by members of ECO Executive and is in line with ECO Policy that was developed in consultation with ECO member bodies and endorsed by our AGM.

ECO Executive members have visited Great Barrier Island on a number of occasions.

2.0 Key Points

1. ECO supports measures which resolves the status of stewardship land as recommended by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment;
2. ECO is disappointed that the change in land status does not consider other options from conservation park and consider the values would meet those of a National Park.
3. ECO is surprised that the change in status does not consider all conservation land on Aotea and surrounding islands.
4. ECO supports the involvement of Tangata Whenua, Ngati Rehua Ngatiwai ki Aotea, in the designation and management of the conservation areas, including the protection of wahi tapu and wahi taonga.

5. Aotea is an internationally important Island which including North Island Kaka, black petrel, and a range of other threatened species.

3.0 Values of the Areas

The values of the area include the existing Hirakimata-Kaitoke Swamp Ecological Area and Wairahi Forest Sanctuary. The area around Hirakimata includes unlogged kauri forest and is contains the main nesting area of black petrels.

ECO notes that the area is the largest forest area which is possum free and is also free of mustelids, Norway rats, hedgehogs, and deer. The absence of these alien species make the Aotea and its surrounding islands of national, if not international significance.

ECO notes from the discussion document that:

- *At least 75 species of regionally and nationally threatened vascular plants, including the endemic prostrate kanuka (Kunzea ericoides var. microflora) and Great Barrier tree daisy (Olearia allomii) are present on Aotea/Great Barrier Island, making it one of the richest areas for plant biodiversity in the Auckland region.*
- *The island is a stronghold for North Island kaka (Nestor meridionalis septentrionalis), mohopereru/banded rail (Gallirallus philippensis assimilis) and one of New Zealand's rarest ducks, pateke/brown teal (Anas chlorotis). Other threatened bird species on the island include puwheto/spotless crane (Porzana tabuensis plumbea) and matata/fernbird (Bowdleria punctata). Hirakimata/Mt Hobson and other high points in the centre of the island are the principal nesting site for taiko/black petrel (Procellaria parkinsoni) in New Zealand, and titi/Cook's petrel (Pterodroma cookii) are also present.*
- *Other threatened species of note include the only island population of pepeketua/Hochstetter's frog (Leiopelma hochstetteri) and niho taniwha/chevron skink (Oligosama homalonotum), which is only found on Aotea/Great Barrier Island and Te Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Barrier Island.*

The landscape and scenic values of Aotea also make the area worthy a greater protection than stewardship status.

4.0 Mining Issues on Aotea

Great Barrier/Aotea is included in the fourth schedule of the Crown Minerals Act via clause 11.

ECO is concerned that section 61(9) of the Crown Minerals Act enables Ministers to remove areas from the fourth schedule and these areas include Great Barrier Island. This change was included in the Crown Minerals Amendment Act 2013:

"(9) No Order in Council may be made under subsection (4) that results in land within a category of land described in [clauses 1 to 8](#) of Schedule 4 of this Act being excluded from that schedule."

Subsection 4 allows the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Conservation to exclude areas not covered by clause 1 to 8.

(4) Subject to subsections (6) to (9), the Governor-General may from time to time, by Order in Council made on the recommendation of the Minister and the Minister of Conservation, amend [Schedule 4](#).

(5) Before making any recommendation for the purposes of subsection (4), the Minister and the Minister of Conservation must consult to the extent that is reasonably practicable, having regard to all the circumstances of the particular case, those persons the Ministers have reason to believe are representative of interests likely to be substantially affected by the Order in Council or representative of some aspect of the public interest.

Great Barrier is included in clause 11 and Kaikoura Island and Rakitu Island in clause 14 of the Fourth Schedule so they are not covered by sub-section (9). If it was a national park it could be covered by clause 1 which can only be excluded by an Act of Parliament. Conservation Park provides no extra protection as they are not mentioned in the fourth schedule.

ECO is concerned that current and future Ministers could use the powers under sub-section 9 to exclude Aotea from the fourth schedule of the Crown Minerals Act.

5.0 Recommendation

ECO recommends that the Department changes the land designation to that covered by sub-section 9, including consideration of the area as a national park. Further that that area include all scenic reserves (including Kaikoura and Rakitu Islands), marginal strips, LINZ-owned UCL land, and appropriate recreational reserves.

6.0 Request

ECO would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission. Please contact ECO at eco@eco.org.nz tel 04385-7545 and copy in ecowatch@paradise.net.nz and for any arrangements about this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Weeber
Co-Chairperson
Environment and Conservation Organisations