

5 March 2021

Via Email to [FMSubmissions@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:FMSubmissions@mpi.govt.nz)

## **Forest & Bird Submission on Mātaitai Applications for Tautuku, Ōtara, and Ōmāui**

1. The Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc (Forest & Bird) is New Zealand's longest running independent conservation organisation. Its constitutional purpose is to take all reasonable steps within its power for the preservation and protection of the indigenous flora and fauna and the natural features of New Zealand.
2. Forest & Bird has a long-standing interest in improving the health and protection of marine ecosystems and coastal areas and we wish to submit in support of Te Rūnanga o Awarua's application for a mātaītai reserves for the lower reaches of the Tautuku and Fleming Rivers, Ōtara, and Ōmāui.
3. We acknowledge the special relationship Te Rūnanga o Awarua have with the area as manawhenua and support their kaitiaki of the proposed reserves.
4. We recognise establishing mātaītai, subsequent management plans, and bylaws, as a useful tool to protect and restore the health of the ecosystems and rare and endangered indigenous species which live there
5. With many marine ecosystems in decline around Aotearoa from overfishing, pollution, and effects of climate change, we're pleased to support efforts to help restore the health of these areas

### **Comment on proposed Tautuku Mātaitai Reserve**

6. Forest & Bird has had a presence in for many decades and in 1964 purchased 550 hectares of land with funds bequeathed by Mrs Lenz. This land, known today as the Lenz Reserve, consists predominantly of regenerating kamahi/rimu/rata forest. It is managed jointly by the Dunedin, South Otago and Southland Branches of the Society.
7. The Lenz reserve borders the proposed mātaītai reserve and the restoration over the last half a century has contributed to improving the health of the Fleming River and Tautuku estuary. After decades of logging activity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, The Fleming River catchment is now one of the only fully forested rivers on the East Coast of Te Waiponamou/South Island.
8. Tautuku Estuary is one of the most intact estuaries in the Caitlins and Eastern South Island. We note the South East Marine Protection Forum included the

Tautuku Estuary proposing a Type 2 Marine Protected Area in their 2016 consultation.<sup>1</sup> Forest & Bird supported this proposal at the time.

9. The proposed restrictions at the time offer a starting point when considering subsequent by-laws for the Mātaitai reserve. The South East Marine Protection Forum proposal notes<sup>2</sup>:
  - a. *The restrictions that are proposed for this estuary are designed to protect the estuary from high levels of extraction that would compromise the ecological systems, as well as bottom disturbance. They include:*
    - *no dredging*
    - *no set net fishing*
    - *no commercial line fishing*
    - *no mechanical harvesting (including spades for collecting shellfish)*
    - *no fyke net fishing*
    - *no whitebaiting*
10. While we were disappointed that the Type 2 proposal didn't proceed at the time we are pleased that the mātaitai proposal is of a greater area than that proposal and offers the opportunity for some protection of the important ecosystem in the area.
11. The Otago Regional Council recognises the importance of the area and lists it as a regionally significant wetland. Noting the 'Pristine saltmarsh and estuarine communities. It is an important breeding ground for black and yellow-belly flounder. It also provides an important habitat for regionally threatened fern birds'<sup>3</sup>
12. In December 2017 Forest & Bird supported a fish survey by Rosemary Clucas of the Fleming and Tautuku rivers. The full report is appended to this submission.
13. In summary, the survey revealed nationally significant populations of the threatened non migratory Galaxid fish *Galaxis golumoides* in the upper reaches of the Tautuku and Fleming rivers, where, above the waterfall barriers, the rivers remain free from introduced trout.
14. Since the 2017 survey giant kokopu have been found in the lower Fleming river.
15. The pristine nature of these upper reaches of the two rivers further highlight their importance in terms of native fresh water biodiversity and that further benefit would be gained by establishing a mātaitai in the lower reaches of both rivers which could enable the conservation of any threatened species.
16. A mātaitai will be a useful way to ensure no commercial fishing takes place such as for tuna (eel), and we support the intention for a conservative management plan to ensure the health of the fishery is restored for generations to come.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/semp/consultation-document-vol-1-low-res.pdf> pg 160

<sup>2</sup> SEMP 2016 pg 160

<sup>3</sup> ORC Regional Water Plan for Otago, Schedule 9

17. Forest & Bird actively undertakes extensive predator control in the Lenz reserve and wider Fleming river catchment. This reduces the threats posed to the indigenous species by predation from introduced mammals; mice, rates, stoats, weasels, hedgehogs, possums and feral cats. Feral pigs and deer are also known to cause river sedimentation and are actively hunted to reduce numbers.
18. Given the significance of the Lenz reserve for the catchment, Forest & Bird would like to co-operate in contributing to and supporting the subsequent management plan to assist with an integrated improvement to the health of the catchment as a whole.

### **Comment on proposed Ōtara Mātaitai Reserve**

19. Forest & Bird supports the proposed Ōtara mātaitai reserve. We note the important habitat of sandy beaches and rocky reefs for a range of marine life including pāua, karengo (seaweed), hapuka (groper), trumpeter, rāwaru (blue cod), koura (crayfish) and rimurapa (giant kelp).
20. Nationally Vulnerable Rāpola/New Zealand Sealions are known to come ashore at Waipapa Point and less commonly on Wiapapa beach and other beaches nearby.
21. We acknowledge the area is already closed to commercial fishing of shellfish but support further restrictions to protect the health and restoration of marine life present and we would be interested providing input into further discussions regarding subsequent by-laws

### **Comment on proposed Ōmāui Mataitai Reserve**

22. Forest & Bird supports the proposed Ōmāui mataitai reserve.
23. The reserve will help to strengthen the effectiveness of the existing commercial fishing regulations in the area and the adjacent Motupōhue Mātaitai in order to restore the health of marine life in the area
24. We would be interested in providing input into further discussions regarding subsequent by-laws

Thank you for considering our submission.

Ngā mihi nui,  
Rick Zwaan

**Rick Zwaan**

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**Appended:**

- Fleming and Tautuku Rivers 2017 Survey