

Submission:

Goats

Most of the Native Forest covered Maori Owned Land in our District on the Coast is legally protected by way of Nga Whenua Rahui Kawenata with the Minister of Conservation.

The Kawenata on their own, while giving legal protection does not provide protection against the greatest threat to the indigenous biodiversity of our forests, namely pests.

The Opotiki District Plan contained a very important contribution by the Council to indigenous biodiversity, in having a clearly stated prohibition on the farming of goats within an area bounded by the Motu and Raukokore Rivers. "*Goat Management Area*"

Over the years Goat farming on the Coast has been tried and proven to be a failure. Infestations of goats in the Raukokore and Kereu river Catchments in the late 1980's and early 1990's (the goat boom) and earlier infestations from escaped goats on the Eastern side of the Raukokore River, had a significant negative impact on the biodiversity of our forests.

Millions of dollars of public funding has been spent over the years on Pest control in our District. The Bay of Plenty Regional Council has been a significant contributor to pest Control and in particularly goat control in recent years.

All reports indicate goat numbers in our native forests have declined significantly, as a result of all the good work done to date, to a point where the total eradication of goats from our forests is a distinct possibility. Indeed, reports indicate via the Judas Goat program that there are now, no goats in large tracts of the Kawenata lands, and suggests that goats that remain are in very small numbers in relatively isolated pockets.

The risk of re-infestation of our forests by goats is very real, to which we are seriously concerned both for the destruction of our forests, and the ongoing costs, in having to deal with raising the funds to bring any re-infestation under control.

In support of our submission, we point to a local (*Opotiki District*) example whereby for many years up until 1987, the then NZ Forest Service had in place a programme to eliminate goats from the Waioeka and Urutawa Forests near Opotiki and goat numbers were reduced to very low levels, a point where we believe we are at in our rohe (east of the Motu River) at this time.

However a major restructuring and the demise of the NZ Forest Service meant the end of this programme, and as a result, all the good work of the NZ Forest Service, with its huge costs, was lost in a matter of a very few years whereby goat populations were back to plague proportions and had spread even further still into the Raukūmara Forest Park and towards the Coast. Goat control in the area was re-instated in the late 1990's and a very effective partnership between the Department of Conservation, Bay of Plenty Regional Council and private landowners has once again seen goat numbers much reduced with around 17,000 goats removed over the last 10 years or so, again at great cost.

We believe the Opotiki District Council does recognise the impact of goats on native forests, noting (Section 16.3.1 of the operative District Plan), where the *keeping/farming* of goats is not permitted between the Motu and Raukokore Rivers.

However, as owners and representatives of Beneficial owners of Native Forests under legal protection by way of Kawenata, covering most of the Coast ward, both inside and outside the current exclusion

zone, we believe the risks to our Native Forests of keeping any goat at all within proximity of our forests is far too high.

History has shown that notwithstanding all the best of intentions, and the best of endeavours, escaped goats have severely damaged our forests. We believe we have a right to be free of goats and the right to be free of the risks of goats re-infestation.

Accordingly we propose that the District Plan be amended as follows:

1. Rename the area referred to as Goat Management Area to:

Goat Free Zone.

Rationale: "Goat Management Area" carries the implication to an ordinary person at first glance, that it must be OK to have goats as long as they are managed.

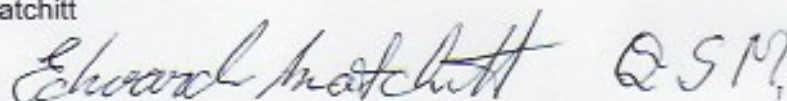
In contrast "Goat Free Zone" is very clear that no goats allowed and shows a commitment that we are serious about keeping goats out of our native forests.

2. The area of the "Goat Free Zone" be extended to encompass all Land in the District between the current "Goat Management area" to the Eastern Boundary of the Opoliki District.

The impact of our proposal on any landowner is in our view minimal. We know of only 1 person that will be impacted, and given that only 1 goat is involved, doing the maths is not required.

3. The Legal owner of any goat that strays onto any land within the Goat Free zone is made liable for all costs associated with the eradication/removal of his/her goats including their progeny if any, from that Goat free zone.

Signed: Edward Matchitt



Chairman: Whangaparaoa 1B2B9 Trust

Whangaparaoa 1B2B10 Trust

Whangaparaoa 3B Trust

Te Piki 10 Trust

Tawaroa Toopu Trust

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