

BEFORE A RESTRICTED COASTAL ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

UNDER

The Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

A resource consent application to discharge dredging spoil in the Otago Harbour

Port of Otago Limited – 2010.193
2000.472 (ammendments)

EVIDENCE

1. Introduction

1.1. Neil McDonald Skipper/Owner F.V Triton Joan Fishing Co Ltd

1.2. I will now present my evidence, on behalf of myself and my wife Michelle Taiaroa, on resource consent application 2010.193 & 2000.472 by Port of Otago Limited.

2. My Concerns

The history of commercial fishing within this area is generational. I have been fishing for 32 years and have predominantly worked as a day fisherman out of Port Chalmers and Otakou. In the early years there were as many as 26 boats fishing out of Port Chalmers and a majority of these boats made a living in and around the area of AO.

The fishing patterns in this area is very temperamental. Scientists and so called experts will never know the pattern of the fish in this area like I do. I have made a sustainable living by being aware of the migratory pattern of the fish around AO. The reports states that there will be minor inconvenience for the fishers in this area. I have a real fear of reading that report and its basic dismissal of the fisherman being described as a minor inconvenience. We have a pattern which involves breeding fish coming into this area and rejuvenating stocks for the future. English Soles come in through this area to spawn. This can be the breeding stock of our future as far afield as Cape Saunders, right into Blueskin Bay and as far north as Shag Point. Other species such as Flounders Brill Red Cod and Elephant fish make up the pattern of fish which will be affected by the 7 million cubic metres of material deposited on AO. To think that this will only have a minor effect is wishful thinking by people lacking any real knowledge of the geographics of this area. I believe the monitoring undertaken by Port Otago has fallen well short of any real substance. I have seen conditions in this area that are very extreme and we have had cycles and patterns wiped out by severe weather conditions. Nowhere in Port Otago's documentation has allowed for such conditions and coupling this together of dumping could well be the catalyst for this specific area for quite a long period of time.

The current dump site at Haywards Point is an example of what I have witnessed in recent years in regards to my concerns of what may happen at AO. There is a definite shallowing at Haywards Point and in certain conditions this is extremely hazardous. It humps up and now breaks off shore from Haywards Point in an area where the dumping occurs. Knowing the effects first hand of Haywards Point and then putting the sheer size of the AO site in terms of tonnage, logic states that this will also become a hazardous area as well as unworkable.

The science that has been utilised to model this project states that impact on commercial fishery and environment will be minor. From my first hand experience I challenge that and completely disagree. As a leasee fisher we are in a very vulnerable position day fishing out of Otakou. Our livelihood is about catching a sustainable quota parcel. This is not made up of huge tonnage. We try to mainly cater to the fresh fish market. This is about landing fish daily to a market that demands that fresh quality. Our parcel is diverse and is made up of 7 major species. All these species are caught in an area of a 15 to 20 mile circumference of AO and I once again re-iterate that if the modelling and the dumping statistics are even partially wrong this area will be effected for an unknown time.

The dumpsite AO. I am very concerned that even the scientists and the experts say around the area of AO will be the most affected area for fish stocks and other marine organisms. I know as

a trawler man that if we work close to that area we will be spreading the silts and the sand across a wide area. If these prove to be hazardous to the fish life in this area we will be guilty of our own demise. If this sand and silt don't disperse as the scientists and the experts predict, can anyone tell us how long our livelihood will be in jeopardy?

In addition to trawling we crayfish in an area from Karitane to Pleasant river. Modelling shows that this area will be affected by the on flow of silts and sediment from the dump site. If this does happen our already vulnerable business will be affected to a point that we will no longer have a sustainable operation.

In addition to this there has been no modelling completed on the effects of other channels in the harbour. In particular the Otakou channel is imperative to our existence. It is the only access to our wharf at Otakou. By changing the dynamics of the main channel it may be that the Otakou channel is effected to. If this is the case I expect Port Otago to maintain the Otakou channel to a safe and navigational depth.

This is my livelihood that I raise my family on. My wife and I are not opposed to the dredging such however the area that will have a major impact on us is the dump site AO. This is our trawl area and if that site is designated as the dump site, we will be out of business – our livelihood will be compromised.

3. Summary

In summary I believe Port Otago has fallen short of a professional level of correspondence with effected parties. I believe as a proud fisherman that the Port Chalmers Fisherman Society has been in existence for 100 years and in that time Port Otago and Port Chalmers fisherman have managed a very honest and effective working relationship. I believe the integrity of the fisherman that will be effected in this area has been compromised to a stage where we are fighting for our survival. I believe Port Otago is a very necessary commercial business and I have no animosity against Port Otago but I believe there needs to be now a higher level of consultation.

I have a real passion for the fishing industry and I believe our sustainability is about fighting for what we believe in. We can catch a total of between 75 and 90 tonnes of fish annually in this area not including crayfish. We have had many battles over the years from varying groups from ill advised politicians to people who think the fishing industry is responsible for barbaric attitude. As fisherman we are conservationists who believe in what we are doing.

I believe my biggest threat to our livelihood could well be Port Otago.

4. Conclusions & Recommendations

- We seek mitigation for compensation for lost income for our trawl fish for the period predicted to be unproductive.
- We seek further mitigation for compensation if that predicted unproductive period is actually longer than anticipated in the dump site of A0.
- We seek mitigation for compensation for lost income for our crayfish for the period predicted to be unproductive.
- We seek further mitigation for compensation if that predicted unproductive period is actually longer than anticipated in the crayfish area of Karitane.
- We seek mitigation in the event that the impact from the dump site has wider adverse affects to our livelihood in the area 3 zone.
- We seek continuous monitoring during the dumping operation and the halting of all dumping if it is shown that the assumptions of sediment flow or any other effect not considered, exist.
- We seek Port Otago will maintain the Otakou channel to a safe and navigational depth if the changes to the main channel make access difficult to the Otakou wharf.

4 That concludes the evidence of Neil McDonald of Joan Fishing Company Ltd

5 Thank you.