

**Proposed East Coast Beach Vehicle Bylaw: Hearing 23-25 November 2021
Verbal Submission of M. Stoneley (Tuesday 1.30pm)**

Members of the hearing Panel - Tena koutou katoa

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Nga mihi mahana ki a koutou.

I have lived and worked in Marlborough for 40 years. I am now retired. I am both a keen freshwater and saltwater angler. I am an active member of two fishing Clubs in Marlborough and hold executive positions. Today though, I address you as a private individual who has a keen interest in fishing and the outdoors generally.

Whilst I completed the online form with some comments to the questions, the process was quite restrictive and I thank you for the opportunity today to speak further about the proposed Bylaw.

We are blessed in Marlborough with the Sounds and an abundance of coastline for saltwater fishers and gathers of kaimoana. Often though I despair at the lack of access to beaches and what looks like good fishing grounds. I enjoy surfcasting and snorkelling for food. The activity is relaxing, yet full of excitement from anticipation and great for your well-being. Being outdoors and at peace with nature, gathering something valued for its nutritional benefit and exercising are all good for your wairua. My whanau enjoy the freshness of any kaimoana I harvest.

Of great concern to many people who enjoy the outdoors for gathering kai from fishing and hunting is the continuing disappearance of access to public lands often pursued by local body government departments and small, organised vocal groups. They may think that it's well-intentioned but it can also be seen as self-serving.

There is a growing feeling in NZ that some groups of outdoor users are being restricted from all sorts of access more often. In my time in Marlborough, I have seen places locked off by what seems to be an attitude of convenience. Particularly the vehicle and boat accesses. It appears that the thought is, it's easier to close down any areas where a problem, perceived or otherwise, exists than to seek a resolution with compromise and accommodation for the needs of all.

Despite lengthy historical use bureaucracy can quickly remove access points. Meeting the different objectives of each group does not appear to be on any agendas. Where a few do the wrong thing or mis-behave, there seems to be a quick reaction of locking up places and thereby punishing every past or future prospective user.

I'll acknowledge it is not always necessary to drive to a fishing site on the beach but it is nice. Close access is useful when loaded up with all your day's fishing equipment. As age advances the carrying of too much gear can limit one's enthusiasm and enjoyment.

You could imagine then that I was both concerned and disturbed to learn that this proposed Bylaw was being put forward with the suggestion that all motor vehicle access along most of the lengthy coastal area outlined would be prohibited. Whilst heavy vehicles like utes may be unsuitable in some areas along the coastline the use of quad and motor bikes would certainly be worthy of consideration for continued access.

As an outdoors person I love and respect the environment. I also enjoy tremendously being in it. I understand the fragility of some areas and their ecosystems. I would agree that mankind has been doing a terrible job at managing many habitats and destroying nature faster than the earth can cope. I have some empathy with those who wish to ban all vehicles from this coast line but in my experience, life achieves the most benefit for everyone when all parties arrive at an amicable solution. One that has been developed through lateral thinking, involving compromise and accommodates as many differing views or needs as possible.

With this in mind I believe that some controlled vehicular activity can be accommodated on many parts of this coastline. The idea that the entire proposed area be exclusive of any vehicles is in my view unreasonable and unnecessary. We can have people enjoying hikes in the area when others are driving to spots for gathering kaimoana. With efforts like a well-marked track in place, an abundance of educative signage, protected areas fenced off, and speed limits in place the various groups of people using the area could co-exist alongside, but apart from, threatened species and environmental areas at risk.

Promoting one use of the coast to the exclusion of another group is not necessary when a workable solution can come from this process now. Although outside the Bylaw proposal process, here's an exciting thought. Like the many river accessways that Fish and Game Councils around NZ organised for fishers, some kind landowners might be encouraged to allow an accessway along certain points for vehicles to get to the beach instead of them being driven along it. That way control of access on and across the beach would be mitigated.

In conclusion I'd wish to restate the main points advocated here today.

- An approach whereby some groups are denied access to public lands unless walking is unfair
- It is possible to accommodate differing interests with some give and take
- Define those areas of risk with good boundaries to stop encroachment
- Good education signs and clearly marked accessways will assist people to the right thing
- Allow certain types of vehicular access and maybe define times for access use
- Perhaps some landowners might be encouraged to open selected accessways to specific spots along the coast.

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Tena koutou, Tena koutou, Tena koutou katoa.