



Rena Recovery
Long-Term Environmental Recovery Plan



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What remains of the bow section above water at Otaiti (Astrolabe Reef). Taken 21 February, 2013.

Rena Recovery Newsletter – Issue 9

This month has proved to be as busy as ever for the Rena Recovery team. With the support of partner organisations we continue to monitor wildlife and marine ecosystems, research oil impacts and work with iwi across the Bay of Plenty to gain a greater understanding of the long-term effects of the Rena grounding.

The owners and insurers of the Rena are currently seeking feedback from the community on how to deal with the remainder of the wreck. The Rena Recovery team is not involved in this process and continues to focus on monitoring the Bay of Plenty environment through the long-term recovery programme.

Read on for an update on wildlife, kaimoana sampling and Otaiti (Astrolabe Reef).



One of the largest tuatua measured as part of the kaimoana sampling programme for Rena Recovery.

Pest traps help dotterel breeding season

The Department of Conservation leads the Rena Recovery wildlife programme. This programme supports a number of established community initiatives to protect endangered species which were affected by the Rena oil spill. One major focus is the breeding success of New Zealand dotterel along Bay of Plenty beaches.

New Zealand dotterel are small shorebirds that nest along the coastline of the upper North Island, including Bay of Plenty. They are threatened by introduced mammal predators, loss of breeding habitat, and are often disturbed or endangered by vehicles and other human activities on the beach.

Sixty of these birds were caught as a pre-emptive measure when the Rena cargo ship first grounded, and twenty of these birds came from Maketu. They were held in captivity for two months to ensure they were not affected by oil washing ashore. Sadly three of the Maketū birds died while in captivity.

As a result of all the disruption, the dotterel breeding last season was not very successful, in particular due to the smaller numbers of birds at breeding sites during October and November 2011.

Rena Recovery is supporting programmes that will help the dotterel breeding season get back to normal post-Rena. One of the most effective techniques to improve breeding success is to set traps to reduce the number of predators near breeding sites.

Julian Fitter, a passionate environmentalist and community volunteer, is helping with the pest trapping programme at Maketū spit and at Dotterel Point in Pukehina.

Julian is a man who wears many hats and it is through his role as Chairman of the Maketū Ongatoro Wetlands Society and as the Eastern Bay of Plenty Shorebirds Coordinator, that he has come to help with the Rena Recovery programme.

“We are quite pleased with the breeding season this summer, considering the disruptions of last season. The dotterel that were in captivity seem to have fallen back into their usual routine. Some appear to have left the Maketū nesting site, but more have been counted at the Pukehina site, so I think we are still tracking ok,” he said.

“We have placed traps in the fences across Maketū spit, and we have also put some right down the spit. These traps are for catching hedgehogs, stoats and rats which are the main predators of dotterel eggs and chicks.”



Julian Fitter, Chairman of the the Maketū Ongatoro Wetlands Society, who is helping monitor traps set as part of the Rena Recovery programme.

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The traps, funded by Rena Recovery, will be used for many years and Julian is hopeful the Maketū Ongatoro Wetlands Society will continue its work to protect dotterel with the support from the community to achieve their ultimate goal of establishing the area as a Ramsar site, a wetland of international importance.



Sampling at Otaiti

The monitoring team have begun rigorous chemical testing to build a greater understanding of possible contaminants out at the wreck site.

The team will soon be involved in taking more samples of sediment and kaimoana from the wreck site as part of a thorough investigation into contaminants. There is still a lot of work to be done to determine the significance of any contamination and its environmental impact. However the contamination found is still thought to be localised.

Scientific teams are developing a sampling protocol so that they can be certain they are returning to the same site in the future to assess any changes. GPS is being used and sites are being identified and mapped using a GPS grid reference.

The salvors are closely monitoring the environmental impact of debris recovery as it is known that debris removal has the potential to disturb sediment and potentially contaminants.

Introducing Kia Maia Ellis

Kia Maia is studying her PHD with Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangī and the focus of her work is on kaitiakitanga, the impact the Rena has had on Māori communities and how we can better manage our kaimoana species. Kia Mīa tells us a bit about herself and her research.

**Ko Mauāo te Maunga, Ko Tauranga te Moana, Ko Mataatua te Waka, Ko Ngāi te Rangi te iwi, Ko Ngāi Tūkairangi me Ngāti Tapu ngā hapū, Ko Hungahangatoroa me Waikari ngā marae.
Ko Kia Maia Ellis taku ingoa. Nō Matapihi ahau. Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.**



Kia Maia Ellis, PHD researcher at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangī

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I have grown up by the coast and am very passionate about the moana. The research that I am a part of aims to look at what kaimoana we have here, how we use it and how we can best look after it post-Rena.

What the Rena has highlighted, is that we have many communities that rely heavily on kaimoana in their diets. Collecting and eating kaimoana is a huge part of Māori culture and nutrition.

Part of our research involves surveying local people and building an understanding of the cultural impact the Rena grounding has had on Māori communities. Dr Paul Kayes from Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi is supervising my project, and I have had great support from summer students who have helped with surveys and monitoring.

Within this project there is a team of us working on shellfish abundance and distribution surveys that will sit alongside an assessment of harvesting activity particularly in Tauranga Harbour and the Mātaitai Reserve.

We are currently surveying tuangi, titiko and pipi but also hope to include pāua, kuku, kōura and kina in the Mātaitai Reserve. The project will assist with developing fisheries management plans for the Tauranga Moana Iwi Customary Fisheries Trust.

While it is important that our research looks back at the past and what has happened, I am most excited about looking to the future. It's about thinking about our kaitiakitanga role from a long-term perspective that enables governance and participation by tangata whenua. Our research is about capacity building, future planning and improving the way we look after our taonga, our moana long-term.

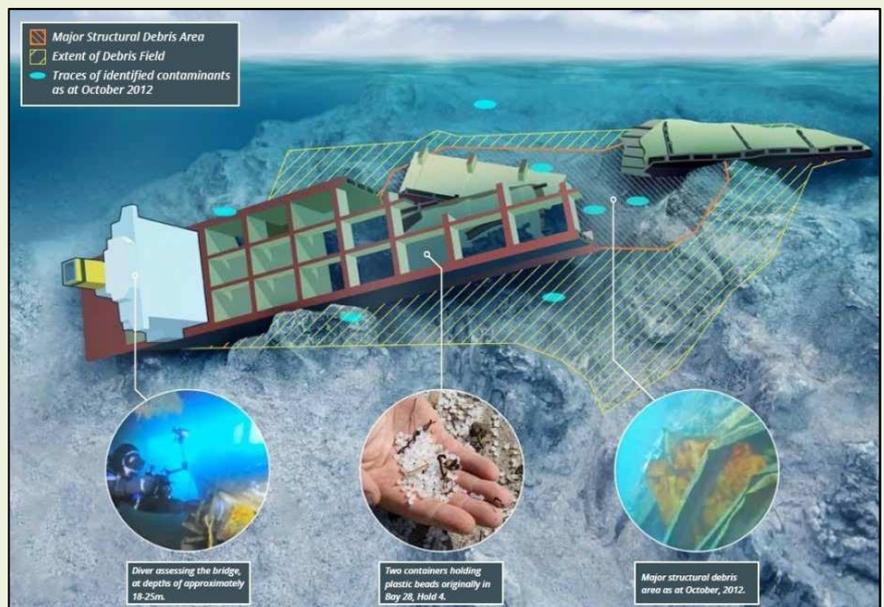
Owners seek feedback on proposal to deal with remaining wreck

The owner and insurer of the MV Rena are now in the next round of community consultation to discuss details of a proposal to deal with the remaining sections of the wreck.

The proposal being put forward will involve an application for consent under the Resource Management Act to leave the remaining sections of wreck and any debris in a way that is safe for the public, and ensures the consequences of doing so supports the future regeneration of the reef.

“We will be seeking further feedback on the proposal from the Bay of Plenty community, which will include more hui with local iwi and hapū groups before a final decision is made,” said Captain Owen.

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A diagram of the Rena wreck as it lies on Astrolabe Reef, supplied by the Owners and Insurers.

“If the consents are applied for and granted, a restoration package will be established to provide funding for a range of community and iwi-based research scholarships, as well as grants for environmental, social, cultural and/or economic projects across the Bay of Plenty,” he said.

In addition to hui and focus group meetings, there is a drop-in information day on Thursday 28 February from 4-7pm at the Mount Surf Club.

For more information visit www.renaproject.co.nz.

Full public process before any decision about Rena's future

The Bay of Plenty Regional Council has issued the update below to remind people of the resource consent process.

Bay of Plenty Regional Council's Chief Executive Mary-Anne Macleod said that any decision to leave the remaining Rena structure on Otaiti (Astrolabe Reef) requires a “full and robust” resource consent process, and no consent application had yet been made.

Any consent application would be publicly notified to give the public every opportunity to express any concerns through this statutory process.

If a consent application is made in the future, the Regional Council would engage the best available scientific and technical advice to ensure an informed decision could be made.



What remains of the bow section above water at Otaiti (Astrolabe Reef). Taken 21 February, 2013.

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