

ad's dumping ground

by Fiona Edwards



Rangitoto from Tiritiri Matangi. To the right is the port company's north Rangitoto dredgings dump site. Photo: Tony Lilleby/DoC

however, very strong disagreement about where sediment dredged from the port area should be disposed.

In 1988, at the request of the Regional Water Board, the Ports of Auckland Ltd (the successor to the Auckland Harbour Board) assessed the environmental effects of decades of dredge dumping at the Rangitoto site. They found that there was a change in the physical nature of the sea floor, detectable changes in the chemical composition of the sediment within the dump site, and that there had been "disturbance" to benthic communities buried by the sediment. Local divers point out that

before dumping occurred at the Rangitoto site, the area was heavily stocked with crayfish. From July to September every year, thousands of female cray bred in the area. On the seaward side of the dump zone, scallop beds flourished. Within two weeks of the dumping, most of the scallops were dead – just empty shells on the sea floor. Within a month, the crayfish living along the rocky foreshore had gone.

The Auckland Regional Water Board considered the port company's findings and decided that the north Rangitoto site would be unable to cope with the intended disposal of twelve million cubic metres of

sediment over 15 years. The Regional Water Board suggested that the port company investigate alternative long-term disposal sites. In September 1990, the port company applied for two water rights, one for 270,000 cubic metres of maintenance dredgings from around the wharf areas and a second, much larger water right, for 11.8 million cubic metres from capital works – sediment dredged from the Rangitoto channel. In total, the two water rights cover 12 million cubic metres of sediment – an amount equal to about 38,000 houses full of silt. The port company intends to dredge and dump this