

Maori Mechanisms

Maori customary fishing rights and iwi management of areas important to customary food gathering have been recognised by several legal statutes since 1992.

- The Fisheries Act enables appointment of tangata kaitiaki, or iwi fishing caretakers, who authorise and monitor customary fishing within their area.
- Mataitai reserves encompass traditional fishing grounds. They generally exclude commercial fishing, and non-commercial fishing is managed by local iwi. Establishing a mataitai involves a lengthy process of consultation with all other users of a local area. The only mataitai established to date is at Rapaki Bay in Lyttelton Harbour. Mataitai can potentially offer a mechanism to control coastal overfishing, such as depletion of paua, while still enabling customary fishing to take place.
- Taiapure can be created under the Fisheries Act in estuarine or coastal waters that are of special importance to iwi for food or spiritual or cultural reasons. A taiapure is managed by a local iwi committee, which sets regulations for the conservation and management of fish, shellfish and seaweed. Commercial fishing may be allowed. Three taiapure have been established to date (establishment is once again long and complex): at Maketu in the Bay of Plenty, Palliser Bay in the Wairarapa, and Waikare Inlet, Bay of Islands..

These three mechanisms are aimed at enabling iwi Maori to control their customary fishing resource and to manage it wisely. They do have potential to offer more protection to marine life than there has been before, but they are primarily fishing arrangements, not conservation tools.

Existing Marine Reserves

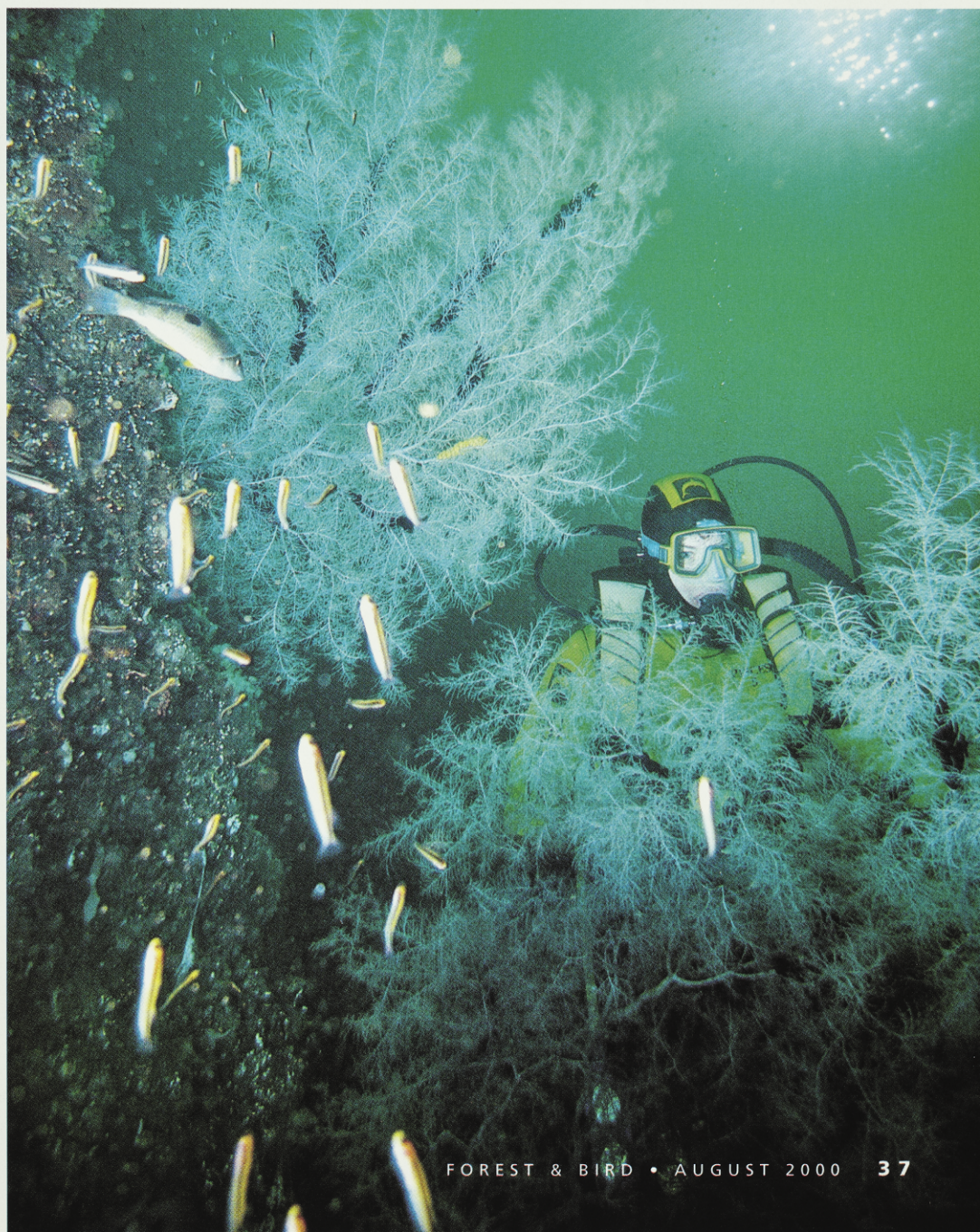
(Source: Report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, 2000.)

sion: he says 'It's crazy to allow any fishing in a marine reserve.'

Enabling specific non-commercial take allows the Minister some flexibility to deal with objectors. But the experience of specifically allowing sport-fishing at the Poor Knights Marine Reserve proved to be a disaster, and after 17 years of injunctions, court battles and reviews, the reserve has finally gone completely 'no-take'. Barry Weeber says the spectacular recovery of snapper numbers at Poor Knights since the end of recreational fishing shows why reserves should be 'no-take'.

While preserving the idea of no-take marine reserves, it may be helpful to develop other types of marine protected areas, like marine parks, which allow a range of levels of impact, akin to different types of land reserves, says Barry Weeber. This may include giving legal recognition to internationally significant sites such as World Heritage Areas and coastal RAMSAR sites.

Fiordland has two tiny marine reserves in a region famed for its underwater life, including black corals (they're white) growing close to the surface. Forest and Bird has suggested the creation of a Fiordland Marine Park to protect its underwater wilderness.



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