

October 11, 2018

Waitakere Ranges Local Board submission on Crown Minerals (Petroleum) Amendment Bill

Introduction

1. The Waitakere Ranges Local Board is part of Auckland Council and represents the area west of central Auckland including most of the area covered by the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area, an area created by the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008.
2. The area includes much of Auckland's west coast and the pristine beaches of Whatipu, Karekare, Piha and Bethells Te Henga.
3. The Waitakere Ranges Local Board has previously submitted on the issuing of petroleum exploration block offers for the sea adjacent to the Waitakere Ranges Local Board area.
4. On each occasion we have opposed the release of land for the issuing of block offers for the area for two basic reasons:
 - Climate change means that we should leave future discovered oil in the ground.
 - The potential environmental damage that would be caused by an oil spill in the area mean that the risk should not be taken.
5. We note the effect of the legislation is to prevent further block offer oil exploration permits being issued for the West Coast and, by majority, fully support the proposal essentially for the same reasons that we have opposed oil drilling and exploration off the West Coast.
6. Our reasoning follows:

Climate change

7. By now it should be accepted that man made climate change is a reality. And that if we are to achieve IPCC's goal of limiting global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees celsius, so that the Pacific can survive, much of the discovered petroleum will need to be left in the ground and not burned.
8. Bill McGibbon of 350.org puts the case loudly and passionately:

"One lesson of this work is unmistakably obvious: when you're in a hole, stop digging ... These numbers show that unconventional and 'extreme' fossil fuel – Canada's tar sands, for instance – simply have to stay in the ground. Given these numbers, it makes literally no sense for the industry to go hunting for more fossil fuel. We've

binged to the edge of our own destruction. The last thing we need now is to find a few more liquor stores to loot."

9. Humanity's future would be grim if existing reserves are burnt, let alone yet discovered reserves.
10. One scientific study (<https://www.nature.com/articles/nature14016>) estimated that burning a third of existing discovered oil supplies would result in an increase in global temperatures in excess of 2 degrees celsius. And that temperature is considered to be dangerous.
11. Johan Rockström, co-author of the recent [Hothouse Earth](#) report has advised that scientists never previously discussed limiting temperature rises to 1.5 degrees. But opinion has shifted in the past few years along with growing evidence of climate instability and the approach of tipping points that might push the world off a course that could be controlled by emissions reductions.
12. He has said "Climate change is occurring earlier and more rapidly than expected. Even at the current level of 1C warming, it is painful. [The recent IPCC report] is really important. It has a scientific robustness that shows 1.5C is not just a political concession. There is a growing recognition that 2C is dangerous."
13. This is why there is an absolute imperative in preventing the discovery of new sources of petroleum and we are going to have to keep existing sources in the ground.

Environmental Damage

14. Our main concern is that if an oil spill occurred on Auckland's west coast, it would affect a highly sensitive ecological area that has high landscape, recreational and cultural values. This coast has breeding areas for several seabird species and is home to the endangered Maui's dolphin and New Zealand fairy tern. The importance of the area is recognised in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008.
15. To put it simply the Waitakere Ranges Local Board does not support any form of oil exploration off the west coast of Auckland because of the risks associated with it, and asks that the precautionary principle be adopted to protect the coastline of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area, and the surrounding coastal marine area. This is a strongly held community view.
16. The coastal marine area is home to the "critically endangered" Maui's dolphin of which it is thought there are only 55 remaining. A Marine Mammal Sanctuary has been created on the coast to try and protect the dolphin in the hope it may come back from the brink, though this is estimated that this will take 300 years even with the best conditions for the mammal. This particular species of dolphin is critically endangered and there are perhaps 50 to 60 dolphin left.
17. Maui's dolphins are highly sensitive to seismic noise such as the noise that would be produced by drilling and their range offshore is not well understood.
18. The potential cost of the loss of Maui's dolphins is immeasurable. Mother Nature is the sum of a complex series of interactions between a huge number of species relating

to earth sky and water and the removal of one species can have initially subtle but potentially and gradually profound effects on the environment.

19. And Maui's dolphins are iconic as well as threatened. If we really are a clean green nation we should be doing everything possible to preserve them.
20. We would request the opportunity to speak to this submission.

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