

My name is Lynnette Gail Whale and this is my husband Reginald Bruce. I am reading this statement on behalf of Reg and myself.

We live at Te Arai on Mangawhai Rd. We purchased our dairy farm in 1976 and still reside there although we have moved from dairying to beef. Our three daughters grew up here and two have returned to Te Arai, with their families, one permanently and one to a weekend block.

In the 37 years that we have lived here we have formed a close association and knowledge of the area and have been involved as volunteers in many groups which strove to and have achieved in making Mangawhai a better place to live.

We have chosen to continue living here because of the peace and tranquillity the area offers us. For us it is a beach of exceptionally good quality, pristine clear water, dunes and outstanding landscape. It forms part of the only large, entirely undeveloped ocean beach on the east coast of the Auckland region. The pine plantation serves to protect and enhance the untamed and isolated feel of the beach. It is a natural, wild, remote environment, free of noise and light pollution and where a sense of well

being is gained. Te Arai is more than just a beach it is an area of exceptional rich rolling rural farmland, a series of lakes, outstanding landscapes, island and ocean views with a very low level of development all of which will be compromised if a plan change is accepted making it difficult for further applications to be declined.

The last plan change requested 650 houses then reduced to 180. They clearly considered that at least 650 houses were needed to make an economic return, we seriously question the economics now of only 46 lots even taking into account the sale of the golf course.

We don't believe the vesting of reserve land to council in exchange for 46 lots plus 2 larger balance lots will in any way compensate us or our community or future generations for what we will lose.

Also the council will be left with the cost of returning the bare sand on the proposed reserve into some form of planting which ultimately falls upon us as ratepayers. Plantings will be difficult if not impossible to establish given the environment especially along the coastal strip reserve.

In time as the sand dunes continue to erode, council will be forced to endeavour to try and contain this erosion as has happened at Orewa and Omaha.

We can quite confidently speak of the sand transgression and the extreme conditions as we grazed the North Forestry block from approximately 1985 to 1992, having to fence off the complete fore-dunes and forestry roads and so have a thorough and practical experience of how the sand behaves in all conditions. Many of the original plantings along the pine wedge when establishing the forest were covered by sand before finally they began to have success. Our farm being some 3 kms in a direct line from the coast has evidence of the sand that would have blown in from the coast. Other Te Arai/Mangawhai residents have similar experiences.

We are both committee members of the Te Arai Beach Preservation Society and founding member volunteers for the Te Arai Dotterel Care Group, which we formed in 2007 and for which Reg is the trapper, and latterly trapper for the New Zealand Fairy Tern Trust on the Mangawhai Refuge. Reg visits the refuge to the north and down to the Te Arai car park to the south most days from August to October and then everyday through until end of January and then odd days depending on the nesting birds until February – March. So has experienced the ever changing environment at Te Arai Beach.

Our main concerns for any residential development of this area are:

### **1 Sand Movement**

The sand movement around the Te Arai Stream in adverse weather conditions is colossal despite what is left of the vegetation wedge ie pine trees planted for this reason. This in itself is not a place for housing development or visitor accommodation. There is considerable erosion moving the dunes inland. Auckland Council surveyors were considerably surprised at the amount of depth of erosion in particular around the Te Arai stream area when I met them on one of my beach trips.

### **2 Te Arai Stream**

The Te Arai stream is of the utmost importance to the New Zealand Fairy Tern survival. Any human presence on the water or about the stream will prevent the birds from foraging or nest prospecting. Not only for the pair that nest there but for the birds from the refuge

when the Mangawhai Harbour is considerably busy with human beings or very windy and they cannot find a food source in the harbour. We have regularly observed this happening.

Northern New Zealand Dotterel also rely on the stream mouth for nesting and foraging with up to 9 pairs nesting around the stream mouth. Other pairs are dispersed both north and south of the stream along the beach.

As part of the Te Arai Dotterel Care Groups programme we fence off the canal and other sites where we observe nests. We regularly witness and intervene humans going inside these roped off areas in spite of our signage.

Te Arai Beach and stream mouth is already a no dog area (under the wildlife act) and no vehicle beach (under the former RDC bylaws now enforced by AC). Compliance is a struggle despite the signage in place. Residents and their visitors will naturally gravitate to the stream to recreate. More development will equal more people and more non compliance and more disturbance for the shorebirds.

### **3 New Zealand Fairy Tern**

Over several breeding seasons we have observed speculating by Fairy Tern pairs at the Te Arai stream mouth even to the odd scraping (nests) and then in 2012 a pair successfully bred resulting in a 2 egg nest. We believe this is a direct result of the remoteness and to the extensive trapping programme of the Dotterel Care Group. For many years Fairy Terns have been observed roosting and foraging at the stream mouth with up to 11 individuals observed there this past post breeding season. Te Arai Stream mouth is the last remaining area in its present state where the New Zealand Fairy Tern can expand to.

The vegetation corridor from the wetland quoted will not be of any assistance to shorebirds as they don't require vegetation and it will just create a corridor to allow predators to get closer and we struggle to wonder what will actually benefit by this area. We believe it will be detrimental to the wildlife at the stream mouth and beach.

Beach development as proposed is the one reason why these shorebirds, shore skinks etc. are in decline and close to distinction. There has to be somewhere for these species to raise their young to survive. No mitigation can stop the impact of human presence.

#### **4 No Dogs No Cats**

At present the only dogs that are going to the wildlife refuge and along the Te Arai Beach coastline are doing so illegally but in the presence of their owners, they have not wandered there on their own. Te Arai beach does not have a problem of wandering or stray dogs. But with human habitation within walking distance of the beach this situation could well change. What is going to happen to the residents/holidaymakers that don't comply with the no dogs, no cats policy, especially in the long term? What will the consequences be? Who is going to carry out the consequences? One dog in the daytime, one cat at night time can devastate the whole nesting area. Is it even worth the risk?

#### **Conclusion**

**Planning** – We will not be speaking on any of the planning issues as we support the expert planning evidence presented on behalf of the Te Arai Beach Preservation Society Inc. by Ms Burnette O'Connor. We also support the ecological evidence supplied by Ms Christine Wild of the Te Arai Society and evidence from Ms Heather Rogan on behalf of the New Zealand Fairy Tern Trust.

We agree with council ecologists report and conclusions that any development here (residential or parkland) will potentially disturb or destroy the bird habitat and possibly even contribute to the extinction of the fairy tern.

Permanent residents are more likely to wander further afield than day trippers especially early evening when the shorebirds have settled down after their day of disturbance.

We would like to see this plan change declined in its entirety as there is no benefit to our community, Auckland people at large or to the little critters that are surviving there now.

*Attached letter of support for Te Arai Dotterel Care Group from the Department of Conservation*

Reg and Lyn Whale  
9 October 2013

