

## **An Indigenous-led Community Challenge to Fisheries Management in New Zealand: the Revival of Regional Scale Management Practices?**

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Marine, coastal and freshwater fisheries are culturally, ecologically, recreationally and economically important in New Zealand (NZ) and across the world. Over-exploitation of stocks has resulted in declining catches, particularly in the last 50 years, which has signalled the need for strategies to protect these valuable resources, while allowing sustainable exploitation (Pauly 1995; Jackson et al. 2001; Myers and Worm 2003; Hutchings and Reynolds 2004; Hilborn 2006, 2007). This article outlines an ambitious and novel community-led approach to engage regional stakeholders in local fisheries management, initiated and led by Ngāti Kahungunu (a Māori iwi or tribal grouping) in NZ. This initiative is a significant move away from today's highly centralised national form of fisheries management, and is a step towards a regional form of management that is led by the community for the benefit of the community (e.g. Govan et al. 2006). As such, this proposal represents a challenge to modern management practices, but more importantly it may represent the future for the sustainable utilisation of fisheries resources.

Māori (the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand) have a considerable interest in NZ fisheries, through whakapapa (ancestral) relationships with the land and sea, and long association, utilisation and reliance on these resources for survival. Before the arrival of Europeans, Māori harvested fish stocks for communal needs and trade, and managed their fisheries using tikanga (customs) and strong kaitiaki (guardianship) values to promote sustainability (Roberts et al. 1995). Site-specific management was commonplace and effective because the resource was managed by hapū (sub-tribes) using mātauranga (knowledge) gained through observation and

experience of their tribal areas, built up over many generations, globally known as Traditional Ecological Knowledge. If a species was over-exploited, chiefs would impose a rāhui or temporary closure over an area to allow stock recovery (Maxwell and Penetito 2007). This system of hapū management was holistic in that it simultaneously dealt with all forms of fishing (e.g., subsistence, koha = gifting, trade), incorporated traditional knowledge, was enforced by cultural means, and was often coordinated among hapū.

Fisheries in NZ changed markedly after the arrival of Europeans, from a relatively abundant resource traded between small hapū populations, to a commercially exploited resource supplied to increasing numbers of NZ settlers and foreign traders (Waitangi Tribunal Muriwhenua Fisheries Claim Report and references within). Māori control of fisheries was continually undermined despite its guarantee through the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi (the defining charter between The Crown and Māori). Māori fishing rights through hapū governed fisheries were eroded over time and were eventually replaced by a centralised management regime resulting in a resource fragmented among multiple stakeholders (e.g., customary, commercial, and recreational fishing). Under the present system, the Ministry of Fisheries has responsibility for management and over-sight of all of NZ's freshwater and marine species. Some fishery rights were restored to Māori as a result of the Treaty of Waitangi (Fisheries Claims) Settlement Act 1992. New "customary" management tools such as mātaihai and taiāpure (fishing areas of cultural significance managed by local hapū) were created for the sustainable utilisation of fisheries resources and some commercial fishing quota was returned to Māori. However, this did not resolve conflict between competing customary, commercial and recreational fishers, but complicated and further stalled efforts to effectively manage these resources. Māori now have an interest in, or influence on, approximately 40% of NZ's commercial fisheries (Ministry of Fisheries: [www.fish.govt.nz](http://www.fish.govt.nz)). They are currently the only group in NZ with a stake in customary, commercial and recreational sectors, and therefore have a unique interest in ensuring a balance between the needs of these stakeholders. For this reason, Māori are at the heart of the holistic fisheries management model newly proposed by Ngāti Kahungunu.

Ngāti Kahungunu is an iwi with a strong tribal authority, large population (third largest iwi in NZ, approximately 12% of the Māori population) and the second largest tribal rohe (area) in NZ (~550 km of coastline along the lower southeastern

quarter of NZ's North Island). A steering group, Kahungunu ki Uta, Kahungunu ki Tai (KKUKKT), has been formed to guide the staged development of an integrated freshwater and coastal fisheries management plan for the entire Kahungunu rohe "from the mountains to the sea" (ki Uta, ki Tai). Developing a management plan for Māori in this rohe presents an ambitious and significant challenge, but this model attempts even more. In addition to reintegrating all Kahungunu fishing interests, this model seeks to include all stakeholders (customary, commercial, recreational, conservation, policy, scientists, etc) to ensure that everyone has a say in the management of these fisheries. KKUKKT's vision is Kaitiakitanga o ngā rawa a Tangaroa, mo ngā mokopuna katoa, that is, Guardianship of the ocean's multitudes for all of our grandchildren. This vision is shared by the wider community of stakeholders in the Kahungunu rohe, providing a common goal to generate compromises and reconcile differences among all participants. Ultimately, this plan seeks to develop shared local-scale management that, if effective, will lead to sustainability of all regional fisheries resources.

Once implemented, the Kahungunu fisheries plan will unite all stakeholders to collectively manage their coastline and will present a significant policy challenge for the Ministry of Fisheries. Will the Ministry be willing to adopt new policies and reconsider the way it allocates funding to facilitate management decisions made by hapū and communities? How will the success of this new management regime be judged and over what time scales? If this initiative is successful, how will NZ deal with one regional initiative in a national framework? Will other regions be granted similar autonomy to manage their coastlines, and if so, on what sort of time scales? How will NZ ensure that there is integration among the different regimes given that stocks and presently held quota exist at very different spatial scales to the regional initiative(s)? Can two different management plans exist side by side, or are they mutually incompatible? To date, the Ministry of Fisheries has supported the development of the KKUKKT plan and there is optimism that it will support the plan's implementation.

The desire of communities to regain an active role in managing their own fisheries will require a major change in (1) the scale at which NZ fisheries are currently managed, from large quota areas established in 1986 as part of the Quota Management System, to smaller regional areas, and (2) to the allocation of funding for fisheries research and management, with more resources provided for hapū and

local communities. Moving from a national to a regional spatial management scale is challenging because it still requires integration at national and international levels given the connected nature of the oceans and their biological resources. There are clearly a number of very significant points to be addressed before this new regional approach to fisheries management can be judged to be a success, and before such a region-based management regime can be developed into a comprehensive national strategy. The novel approach outlined here involves increased awareness, recognition and use of hapū management practices, and may signal the start of a revolution in the way that fisheries management is practised in NZ.

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