

Extract from KRC Submission to RDC, May 18th 2004;

Topic: Loss of access to beach and flood potential since 2004 flood.

What we want Council to do: Urgent meeting of concerned parties and action.

Background:

The domain at Turakina Beach and the settlement of Koitiata were established in the 1930s as a seaside resort for the people of Rangitikei. Since that time, recreational use and settlement of the area have steadily increased. There are currently over 100 permanent residents in Koitiata, a population which doubles most weekends and trebles at peak holiday times. The last few years have also brought many day visitors to the area and the camp site has a steady year-round occupancy. Residents and visitors enjoy boating, birdwatching, fishing and especially white baiting.

For many years until 1998, the river flowed past Koitiata to its mouth 2-3 Kms south of the village. Access to the beach across the river was an easy paddle in the summer and a boat trip in the winter. In 1998, the Turakina burst back through its previous mouth two Kms north of the village, leaving the lower reaches of the river as a lagoon. For the next two years, individuals in motor vehicles and on foot crossed the wetland to the beach in many different places. As a result, the area became more swamp like and the beach became even less accessible. Vehicles and pedestrians were destroying the paths and the lagoon bed and endangering the wildlife. Koitiata residents were constantly being bothered by visitors requesting assistance to retrieve stranded vehicles. The southern track out of the village via Rapaki Street became degraded and some individuals laid unsightly rubble on the lagoon bed.

In consultation with RDC, Horizons and DOC, and with financial assistance from local organisations, a group of local volunteers and friends constructed a ford in September 2001. This had the immediate and lasting effect of channelling all traffic to the beach through the one access point. As a result, the wetland and dunes were able to recover and a range of native and migratory birds returned to the area. There was a significant increase in casual visitors to the beach. Virtually all property on the market was sold and house prices rose. The ford was successfully monitored and maintained by a volunteer two-man sub-committee.

Current Situation:

During the flood of Feb 2004, the Turakina burst through the lagoon to its former mouth while continuing to flow through its current one. This prevented the village from flooding.

Since the February flood a new situation has developed. Landslips have occurred on the property of Mr Bob Major along the old river bed between the river and the lagoon, and water cannot run off in that direction. The effect has been to deepen the water at the northern end of the lagoon, including the ford area. Flooding in the village as a result of heavy rain fall is now a possibility, because the water might not be able to flow away to the north.

The ford which has served well since Sep 2001 is now too deep for use even for All Terrain Vehicles.

Ease of access to the beach is now required for the same reasons which existed in 2001.

It is required to prevent individuals driving vehicles and walking all over the area, destroying existing paths and shallows and threatening wildlife.

Access is required for search and rescue. As we all know, over the last few years there has been an increase in foolhardy behaviour on the New Zealand coast. Individuals who do not know this coast could become injured or drowned.

Without ease of access, residents of Koitiata are constantly requested to assist visitors whose vehicles have become stranded.

It is required for wildlife rescue. There is always the possibility of a whale stranding or oil slick.

The beach is a constant fire hazard. Driftwood extends right into the forest south of the lagoon. Access to the north of this area is required for firefighting.

The permanent and weekend population of Koitiata has increased in the last few years and property values have increased. This was due largely to the success of the 2001 ford. Without this access, the population and quality of the area may decline again.

We are also concerned about the effect of the coming whitebait season. White baiting is a passionate pastime in this region. In the past Mr Major has been extremely generous regarding access to the beach and river for white baiters. However, the flood has had a devastating effect on his private roading, and access to the river across his paddocks is now very precarious. It is impassable even to 4WD vehicles and is even hazardous to pedestrians who are not fit and wearing appropriate footwear. Understandably, Mr Major is not prepared to accept responsibility for injury to persons or vehicles on his unstable terrain and he will be closing his gates for at least the 2004 whitebait season. We are concerned that some individuals, especially those who have been using this means of access for many years, might **take it upon themselves to trespass on Mr Major's land**, a situation which will need policing and could lead to ill feeling in the community.

In summary

The Turakina River changes course continuously and we cannot prevent that. However, we do have to live with the changes and manage the consequences

Channelled access to Turakina Beach should be re-established if possible for the following reasons:

- individual multi-pathways are destroying the environment and threatening wildlife
- Koitiata residents are constantly requested to rescue stranded vehicles
- foolhardy individuals are likely to be drowned or injured
- necessary for search and rescue
- necessary for wildlife rescue - eg stranded whales, oil slicks
- necessary for fire firefighting
- keeping trespassers off private property
- maintenance of property values
- more urgent from now on, due to increased number of permanent residents, weekenders and visitors
- **Council's commitment to population growth**
- **Council's commitment to tourism**

The volunteers who constructed the ford in 2001 and are available for working bees as before.

Until safe and easy access is re-established, notices must be erected warning visitors of the hazards of this area.