Wang Chron 16/11/90

Residents worried by river's course

An attempt by Koitiata residents to have the Turakina River put back on a straight course could be thwarted by a mass of red tape.

At present the river follows an almost 2km long, shallow path to the sea, running parallel with the coast and the Koitiata beachside settlement.

Residents fear that if the river is left on that course any large, future flood would swamp much of the settlement.

They want the river diverted onto a straight course to the sea, as it was about 10 years ago.

In the past, the problem was dealt with simply with a few well-placed sticks of explosive.

But the Koitiata residents have now learned that such simple solutions to what they regard as simple problems, are no longer permitted.

The diversion would require a water right from the regional council.

Recently, the Rangitikei District council applied for such a right but that is being opposed by the Department of Conservation because of the possible impact diversion would have on the wildlife values of the present river course.

DoC has not, as yet, lodged a formal objection but is likely to do so before objections close on December 1.

But whether the regional council grants the water right or not, the Koitiata residents, and the district council, have to get around the provisions of the Harbours Act which gives DoC almost total control over the coastline.

And given DoC's attitude to the Koitiata project, it is unlikely to give consent.

The project could also be stopped because of the costs involved in meeting all the legal requirements.

The possibility that the army engineers could have been used to clear the proposed new route for the river, as an exercise, is also fading fast.

And the cost of using private contractors to do the job would be prohibitive.

It is likely that any diversion would be short-term only as the constant drift of sand and shingle down the coast would quickly close the new opening unless extensive (and expensive) additional construction work was carried out.

It would seem that, given the circumstances, the best option for Koitiata folk is to wait for the natural course of events and hope the river cuts its own channel before it floods their settlement.

River Diversion

Contents

River Diversion Project

In 1989 the Turakina River mouth was in its most southerly position, and it was making life difficult for village residents who wanted to go to the beach, to go fishing or do other beach things.

The water from the river had backed up and created flooding in the Teone street area. This was a reasonably frequent occurrence when the mouth was at the most southern point of its trajectory up and down the coast. This time it flooded a basement in Teone street's lowest area. We do not know how often this had happened, or how deep the water was, but this was not going to be tolerated anymore! A new mouth was going to be blasted through the sand spit and the river would go where it was told to go!

It was serious, the Army was being called in. From minutes of 1989 meetings; *"… Army had shown interest … suggestion that an attempt be made to open the river to the sea…"* and *" … meeting with Army…would be held at the mouth … to see where the river could be diverted".*

From then on it was endless meetings and consultations all the way through 1990-91 with everyone who was in any position of authority or had any interest in anything to do with rivers. It involved Planning Water Rights, Engineering, Health & Safety, Harbours Act, DOC, RDC, MWRC, Minister of Conservation, and of course the local branch of the White-baiters Society!

While many and varied were the issues put forward as justification for this grand project, it has been suggested by a long-time resident, *"this had more to do with being able to catch fish than anything else."* Maybe. But it was serious!

But in the end, it was also futile, because in July 1992 a newspaper reported; *"Nature settles river mouth issue … river now goes where residents wanted it".*

So, Mother Nature came along and showed who is in charge. Again.

The next three pages contain extracts from any meeting records when the River Diversion project was the subject, or it was included in a meeting's wider agenda.

For documents that relate to only this River Diversion subject, the total document has also been copied into the following pages. That is noted with the relative extracts below.

1989 *Meeting Minutes of Koitiata Community Council, 6th August 1989*

RIVER:

89:Koitiata 49
A representative of the Army had shown interest in considering the suggestion that an attempt be made to open the river to the sea nearer the present settlement.

The Army representative expressed an opinion that no action be taken until after the equinox period.

As the present Committee will be dissolved by that time, it was agreed that the matter be referred to the future Koitiata Committee to be formed in October 1989.

1989 *Meeting Minutes of Koitiata Community Council, 3rd October 1989*

89:Koitiata 66
River Mouth:

The Chairman advised that subject to this meeting's agreement, a meeting will be held comprising himself, Major Pope and Mr Schellevis would be held at the River Mouth during October/November to see where the River could be diverted.

1990 *Letter to RDC from Koitiata Residents Committee, 14th January 1990*

River Diversion

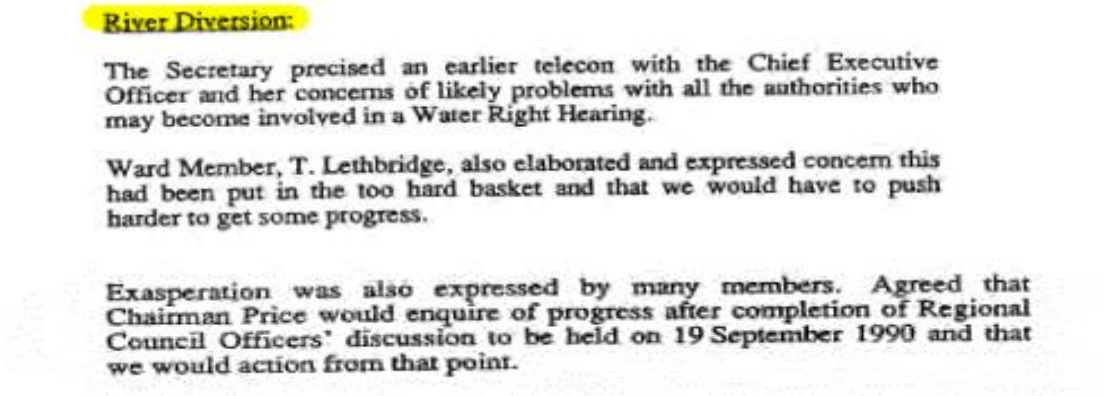
Tim Lethbridge outlined the problems and likely delays on this project due to DOC requiring much more information before they would issue a water right. Our committee will continue to liaise with the Linton Army personnel on this delay, but we wish to re-emphasize the risk of flood damage to properties (and your subdivision investment) should the current situation be allowed to worsen. There is no doubt in the minds of residents who have witnessed past extensive floods that the risk of damage is much greater than before.

1990 *Minutes of Special Meeting of Koitiata Residents Committee with RDC, Regional Council, and Dept of Conservation present, 14th March 1990*

Purpose of the Meeting: To further discuss the proposed diversion of the Turakina River with officials from the Regional Council and the Dept of Conservation.

The full document is on a page following.

1990 *Minutes of Koitiata Residents Committee, 16th September 1990*



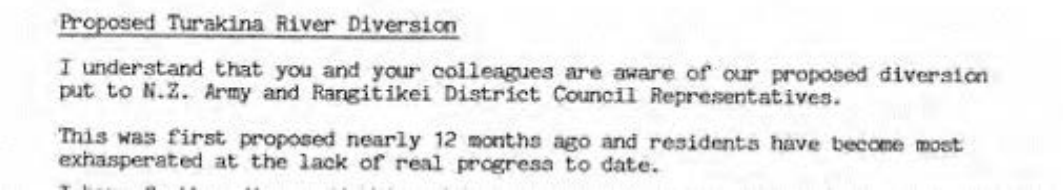
River Diversion:

The Secretary precised an earlier telecon with the Chief Executive Officer and her concerns of likely problems with all the authorities who may become involved in a Water Right Hearing.

Ward Member, T. Lethbridge, also elaborated and expressed concern this had been put in the too hard basket and that we would have to push harder to get some progress.

Exasperation was also expressed by many members. Agreed that Chairman Price would enquire of progress after completion of Regional Council Officers' discussion to be held on 19 September 1990 and that we would action from that point.

1990 *Letter from Koitiata Residents Committee to DOC, 27th September 1990*



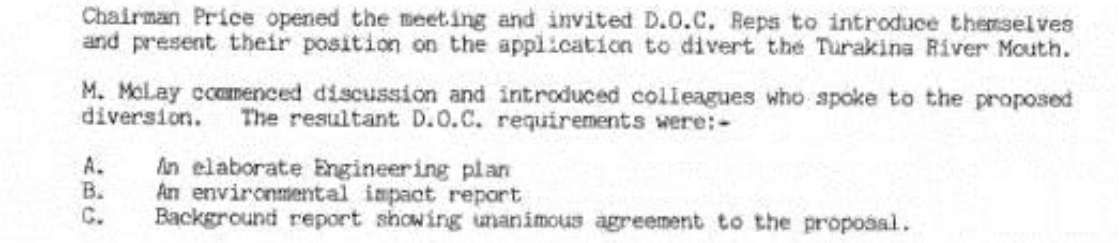
Proposed Turakina River Diversion

I understand that you and your colleagues are aware of our proposed diversion put to N.Z. Army and Rangitikei District Council Representatives.

This was first proposed nearly 12 months ago and residents have become most exhasperated at the lack of real progress to date.

The full document is on a page following.

1990 *Minutes of Meeting with KRC, other Koitiata residents, DOC and RDC personal, 15th October 1990*



Chairman Price opened the meeting and invited D.O.C. Reps to introduce themselves and present their position on the application to divert the Turakina River Mouth.

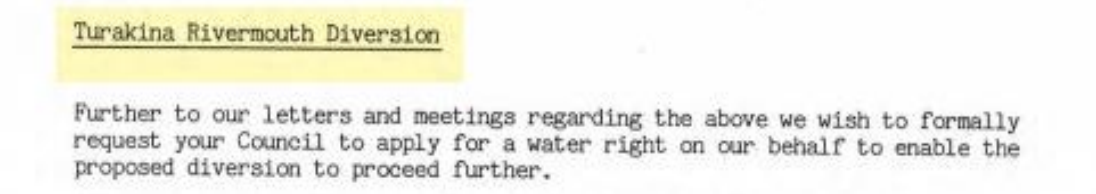
M. McLay commenced discussion and introduced colleagues who spoke to the proposed diversion. The resultant D.O.C. requirements were:-

A. An elaborate Engineering plan
B. An environmental impact report
C. Background report showing unanimous agreement to the proposal.

The full document is on a page following.

Letter from KRC to RDC, 26th October 1990

1990



Turakina Rivermouth Diversion

Further to our letters and meetings regarding the above we wish to formally request your Council to apply for a water right on our behalf to enable the proposed diversion to proceed further.

The full document is on a page following

1990

Minutes KRC Annual General Meeting, 2nd December 1990

River Mouth Diversion: The Water Right issue is proceeding. Ms. Fullerton-Smith informed the meeting that she was seeking an independent Engineer's report on the proposed river diversion. The costs incurred will be levied on all ratepayers in the Rangitikei district not just Koitiata residents. Several residents spoke of the flooding that has occured in the past. It was stressed by the public that if a flood was to occur that human life could be lost and this was of paramount concern to the residents.

1991

Letter to KRC from CEO of RDC, date not known, probably 1991

Turakina River Mouth Diversion Project.

As you know the Rangitikei District Council applied to the Manawatu Wanganui Regional Council for a water right in order to start the process of cutting an opening through the sandspit at the Turakina River Mouth to the Tasman Sea at Koitiata. The Council has been advised that

The full document is on a page following

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(12)

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE KOITIATA RESIDENTS' COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 14TH MARCH, 1990, AT 2PM

PRESENT: Bill Wills (Chairperson)
Dianne George (Acting Secretary)
Ron Sargeant
Geoff Clark

Also in attendance:
Messrs Tim Lethbridge (Councillor of the Riding)
Phil O'Connor
John Garett
Ted O'Connor (Regional Council)
Murray McClay (Dept of Conservation)

Observers included:
Cliff Frazer
Rob Marnos
Barbara Vincent
Peter Schellvis

Apologies received:
Rex Price (Chairman)

Purpose of the Meeting: To further discuss the proposed diversion of the Turakina River with officials from the Regional Council and the Dept of Conservation.

The meeting was opened at 2pm by Bill Wills. Councillor Lethbridge gave a resumé of the progress so far and expressed the desires of the community to have this work completed, especially in respect of the recent flooding - a common problem in this area.

The people present expressed their support to have the diversion carried out.

The Chairman suggested that the visitors go on an inspection of the area under discussion. Those who viewed the area were - Bill Wills, Dianne George, Messrs P O'Connors, John Garrett, Murray McClay and Ted O'Connor.

The members of the Regional Council intimated their support for the proposed diversion. They also indicated they would send a letter to the Dept of Conservation expressing same. Further supporting evidence from Council may include photographs, dating back to 1942 showing what appeared to be the natural flow of the river at the time.

Council members expressed the problems that could occur as a result of the continual flooding of the area, eg erosion, sewage problems (septic tanks), health problems (typhoid from infected insects) and resource wastage (Marram grass planting destroyed). Advantages resulting from the diversion included - foreshore aesthetics, better land use by community people and visitors, increased land sales, less flooding with attendant destruction of present properties and facilities which are gradually being undermined, eg road to the present river mouth.

Dept of Conservation official, Mr McClay, wanted evidence of community support & suggested another public meeting (advertisement by DOC). He also cited the Harbours Act which contains within it cautionary material about such diversions - the effects on the population (local) & wildlife. He then stated he would bring a 'wild-life expert' down to inspect the area (next week if possible).

Returning to the community group on Teone Street, history of past actions involving former chairperson noel Abbott and Army officer, Major Pope, were discussed again with Mr McClay, Phil O'Connor, Bill Wills, Dianne George and Geoff Clark moved to the highest vantage point, ie the hill overlooking the domain, to survey the river, its flow and to show Murray McClay, first hand, the effects of recent flooding on established properties (Austin's basement).

Finally Mr McClay reiterated the procedure to get approval for this action stating it would take time, evidence of community support (meetings, ?petition), inspections by the Dept of Conservation, interdepartmental support, letters of recommendation and finally a signature from the present Minister of the Environment, Mr Phillip Woolerston.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm (14th March, 1990)

(7)

31 Rapakai Street
Turakina Beach
R.D. 11
WANGANUI

27 September 1990.

Department of Conservation
Private Bag
Wanganui

Attention Ms. Leone Fechney

Proposed Turakina River Diversion

I understand that you and your colleagues are aware of our proposed diversion put to N.Z. Army and Rangitikei District Council Representatives.

This was first proposed nearly 12 months ago and residents have become most exhasperated at the lack of real progress to date.

I have further discussed this subject with R.D.C.'s Mr. Phil O'Connor and, subject to your approval, we have pre empted a meeting date of Monday 15 October 1990 2pm at the Koitiata Community Hall.

We would formally request your, (and any fellow colleagues) attendance to this meeting to enable the situation to be fully discussed, and hopefully, some progress to be made.

We consider the river situation has seriously deteriorated since late last year and that the following points are of major concern to residents:

(a) The serious threat of extensive flood damage

(b) The risk of becoming an inland river community (and not a beach community)

(c) The resultant loss in value of residents property's (many have made major investments in recent times)

(d) The limited sale of R.D.C. subdivision sections due to no real beach access.

(e) The possible change of course by the Turakina River back into the D.O.C. forrestry area (previously known as the lagoon)

There are many more possibilities and probabilities that should be discussed.

We are also well aware that our proposed diversion would in no way be of a permanent nature but believe that for little cost outlay a lessening of the dangers outlined would be achieved.

We await your reply and confirmation of the above date as acceptable.

Yours faithfully,

P.L. Fraser
Secretary
Koitiata Residents Committee

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Minutes of Meeting between Department of Conservation Representatives / Rangitikei District Council Reps and Koitiata Residents and Community Committee held in Community Centre Monday 15 October 2pm '90

Present: D.O.C. Reps: Leone Fechney
Murray McLay
John Lithgow.

R.D.C. Reps: Tim Lethbridge
Phil O'Connor

Residents Committee: R. Price, P. Fraser
W. Wills, R. Sargeant
D. George

21 Residents.

Chairman Price opened the meeting and invited D.O.C. Reps to introduce themselves and present their position on the application to divert the Turakina River Mouth.

M. McLay commenced discussion and introduced colleagues who spoke to the proposed diversion. The resultant D.O.C. requirements were:-

A. An elaborate Engineering plan
B. An environmental impact report
C. Background report showing unanimous agreement to the proposal.

When questioned there was no indication of what were (1) acceptable minimum engineering details.

2. Estimated costs to produce an environmental report (i.e. $1000 to $10,000 costs)

Ward Member T. Lethbridge questioned D.O.C. Reps regarding water right procedures /authorities etc., and the chances of the application being approved.

There was much floor discussion on the proposal and a precise of the meeting conclusions were as follows:-

1. D.O.C. required as minimum requirements
   (a) An Engineering report
   (b) An environmental report

2. D.O.C. did not expect the proposal to receive
   (a) Favourable reply from the minister

3. Minimum fees incurred would be

Plan approval	$300	
Water right application	$200	
M.O.T. fee	$ 50	Total $550.

4. The time factor could show considerable delay particularly with the upcoming election.

5. The reports may be produced cheaper and faster using existing R.D.C. information

The meeting resolved that a further meeting of representatives from D.O.C. R.D.C. and Koitiata community committee be held as soon as possible. Community representatives to be R. Price, P. Fraser, P. Shevellis and T. Lethbridge.

10

31 Rapakai Street
Turakina Beach
R.D. 11
WANGANUI

26 October, 1990.

Rangitikei District Council
Private Bag
MARTON

Attention Mr. P. O'Connor

Dear Sir,

Turakina Rivermouth Diversion

Further to our letters and meetings regarding the above we wish to formally request your Council to apply for a water right on our behalf to enable the proposed diversion to proceed further.

Our application is based on the following major points of concern.

(a) The serious threat of extensive flood damage

(b) The risk of becoming an Inland River Community (and not the Turakina Beach Community)

(c) The resultant loss in value of residents property's

(d) The limited sale of R.D.C. subdivision section due to no real beach access.

(e) The possible change of course by the Turakina River back into the D.O.C. / Forestry land area (previously known as the Lagoon).

(f) Possible damage to the existing sewage pond system.

It is our considered majority opinion that the proposal is vital to the future of our community and we pledge our help and support toward the implementation of a river diversion. We also realise the diversion would not be of a permanent nature but that it would reduce the dangers in the near future.

Yours faithfully,

P.L. Fraser
Secretary,
Koitiata Resident Committee

News Chron 16/11/90

Residents worried by river's course

An attempt by Koitiata residents to have the Turakina River put back on a straight course could be thwarted by a mass of red tape.

At present the river follows an almost 2km long, shallow path to the sea, running parallel with the coast and the Koitiata beachside settlement.

Residents fear that if the river is left on that course any large, future flood would swamp much of the settlement.

They want the river diverted onto a straight course to the sea, as it was about 10 years ago.

In the past, the problem was dealt with simply with a few well-placed sticks of explosive.

But the Koitiata residents have now learned that such simple solutions to what they regard as simple problems, are no longer permitted.

The diversion would require a water right from the regional council.

Recently, the Rangitikei District council applied for such a right but that is being opposed by the Department of Conservation because of the possible impact diversion would have on the wildlife values of the present river course.

DoC has not, as yet, lodged a formal objection but is likely to do so before objections close on December 1.

But whether the regional council grants the water right or not, the Koitiata residents, and the district council, have to get around the provisions of the Harbours Act which gives DoC almost total control over the coastline.

And given DoC's attitude to the Koitiata project, it is unlikely to give consent.

The project could also be stopped because of the costs involved in meeting all the legal requirements.

The possibility that the army engineers could have been used to clear the proposed new route for the river, as an exercise, is also fading fast.

And the cost of using private contractors to do the job would be prohibitive.

It is likely that any diversion would be short-term only as the constant drift of sand and shingle down the coast would quickly close the new opening unless extensive (and expensive) additional construction work was carried out.

It would seem that, given the circumstances, the best option for Koitiata folk is to wait for the natural course of events and hope the river cuts its own channel before it floods their settlement.

Turakina River Mouth Diversion Project.

As you know the Rangitikei District Council applied to the Manawatu Wanganui Regional Council for a water right in order to start the process of cutting an opening through the sandspit at the Turakina River Mouth to the Tasman Sea at Koitiata. The Council has been advised that two objections have been received; one from the Department of Conservation on the basis that the proposed diversion appears it might adverse the impact on the wildlife, fisheries, botanical and natural values associated with the Turakina River estuary and that the proposed diversion would have a limited duration and long term detriment to the environment which might outweigh any short term benefits to the applicant. An objection has been received from Tehunanga o Ngatiapa on the basis that insufficient detail had been furnished on the effects of the diversion on traditional habitats of the area. After discussion with you and with Mr Cameron of Armstrong Barton, who is giving the Council legal advice on the matter, the Council has decided to put the application on hold for the meantime. This gives the Council a chance to undertake some more research into the facts of the situation, access the cost benefits of the proposal put forward by the Koitiata residents, and enable the Rangitikei District Council to decide on the need to implement the project.

Mr Cameron has prepared his advice in the light of media attention the case has already received, the concerns of the residents, the issues raised by the Department of Conservation and concerns articulated by local Iwi. He confirms that the Harbours Act apply to the proposed works and therefore the Minister of Conservation's consent will be required before these works can proceed. He confirms also that a Water Right Application to the Regional Council is required (which we have already made, but put on hold) and that a Town Planning Application to the Rangitikei District Council is required. Maori concerns will be of relevance to the Planning Water Right and Harbours Act consent. The information requested by the Department of Conservation forms a useful guide regarding the approach that the Council will be obliged to adopt to obtain the various consent required and it also determines the range of experts which the Council may need to consult.

Mr Cameron suggests that before that project is undertaken the Council should satisfy itself that the works proposed will achieve the Community's objective. He sees that objective as being to prevent flooding and thereby enhance the value of the property and Community generally (as you know some of the residents have seen the main objective as the ease of access to the river mouth). While a technical report is required, Mr Cameron is suggesting a cost benefit analysis would be appropriate particularly given the content of the Rangitikei District Scheme which specifically contemplates flooding problems at Koitiata, and the steps residents should take to minimise their effect. Nevertheless, safety and health issues may also be involved. We have no information concerning this at present and so any Engineering approach might need to be adopted with care.

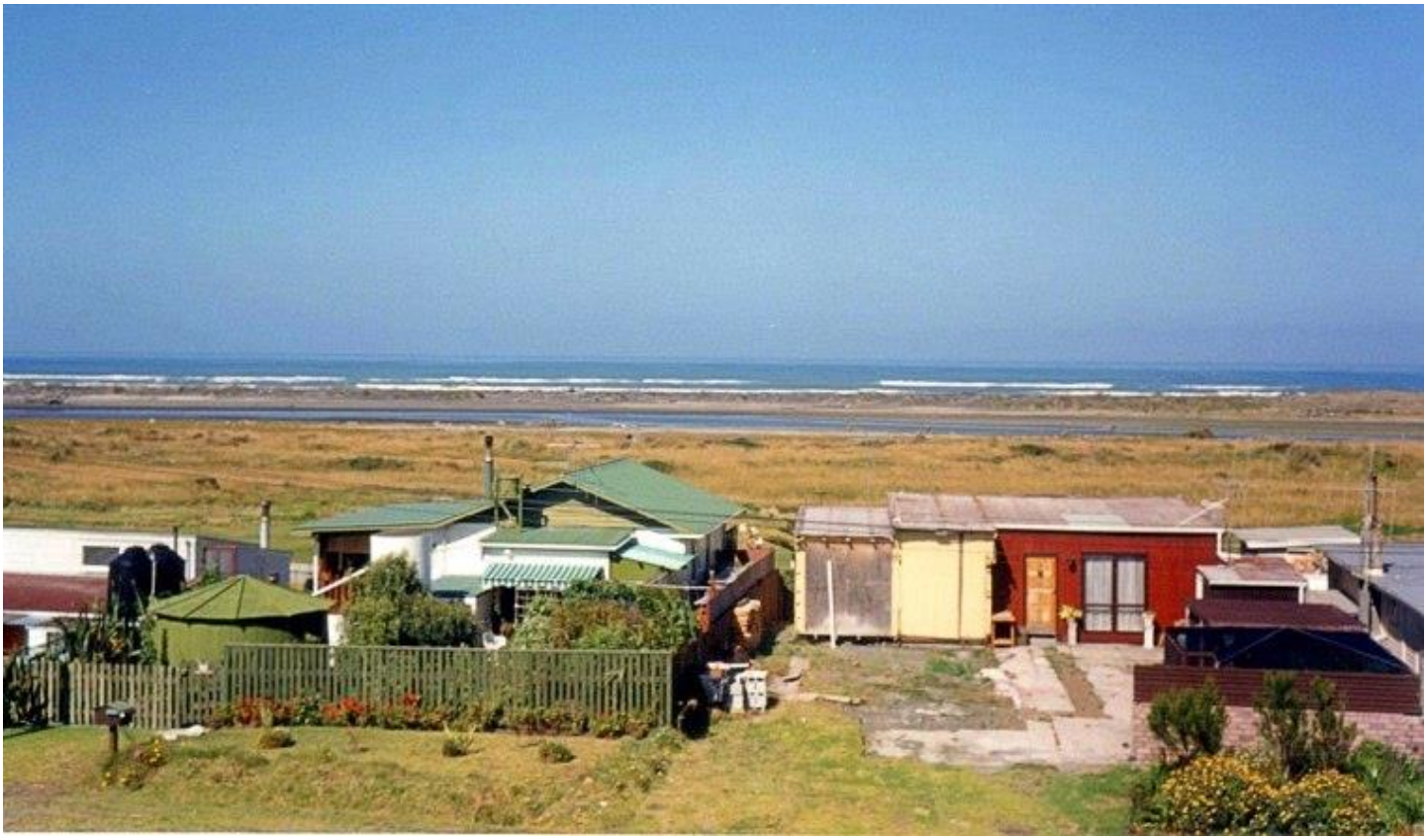
We are discussing the form of an Engineering opinion which might be obtained and the format for a cost benefit analysis of what is proposed together with an assessment of any relevant safety or health issues. When we have that work completed the Council will be in a better position to determine whether or not it wishes to proceed to obtain the various consents required, and it should also be in a position to assess the likelihood of success at each stage of the process.

The procedures may appear to be complex but expert evidence when it is assembled may well simplify the decision making process for it. At this stage, I would recommend that we take a step by step approach because of the considerable costs involved in the whole project. I am talking to the Council about the matter and if it agrees, will proceed as suggested above. I should point out that the Council will be taking a close interest, not just because it has an obligation to ensure the health and safety of the Koitiata residents but because of the substantial costs that will be involved on a District wide basis, should the project be taken right through to completion as originally intended.

I hope the above is helpful for you and your Committee, I would be happy to discuss any aspect of the above in more detail with any of you, should you wish to.

Yours sincerely,

C. Fullerton-Smith
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



This photo was taken from 31 Rapaki Street and recorded as being taken in 1991.

It appears from this view of the river in the background, that the main concern regarding the river mouth position was access to the beach.

Information available from photos, clippings, and recollections from prior years, indicates that the *'river-mouth-location-proble*m' has always existed.

Although it may be a difficulty for residents and visitors, the river does not find it a problem.

The following news clipping shows that, as usual, *"Nature settles river mouth issue."*

Nature settles rivermouth issue 4/1/92

An "act of God" has resolved the question of where the mouth of the Turakina River should be, at least for the meantime.

For several years the rivermouth has been moving south along the coast as a result of natural coastal drift.

That caused the residents of the beachside settlement of Koitiata some concern especially when the river was in flood and threatened lower lying properties in the settlement.

Last year residents asked the Rangitikei District Council to obtain a resource consent for the Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council to "divert" the river by cutting through the sand dunes where the rivermouth used to be.

That step was taken after the Department of Conservation refused permission for the residents, with the help of the Army, to divert the river themselves.

The resource consent application was later withdrawn when Koitiata residents were told that the consent process and the preparation of environmental impact reports could cost several thousand dollars which would have to be met from local rates.

However, at yesterday's meeting of the Rangitikei-Hawke's Bay Conservation Board, Wanganui regional conservator Bill Carlin said the rivermouth was back to its original place.

"The river now goes where the residents wanted it," he said.

Mr Carlin said he had no idea what had happened.

"Theoretically the problem has been resolved by nature. God has intervened on behalf of the settlement," he said.

The diversion is likely to be only temporary though as winter storms and the natural southward drift of sand would close the gap again, Mr Carlin said.