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Artificial reefs will have their day, says promoter

The Marlborough Express | Wednesday, 29 October 2008

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A Blenheim man's proposal to build artificial reefs in the Marlborough Sounds has been turned down by the Marlborough District Council.

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Clive Barker, of the Marlborough Reef Trust, said he was surprised and extremely disappointed that his application for a coastal permit to build reefs made of hollow concrete balls in Queen Charlotte Sound, creating habitat for cod and other marine life, was refused.

"I just really can't understand what they had against it. This was my vision for the future to get more (marine) habitat in the Marlborough Sounds. I am disappointed."

Mr Barker's application came before the Marlborough District Council Hearings Committee on October 7.

He hoped to create two reefs, using the concrete hollow "reef balls" at Koi Point, about five kilometres north of Picton, and Kaipapa Bay about nine kilometres northeast of Picton.

The application was already scaled down from his original idea of building five reefs, three in Queen Charlotte Sound and two in Kenepuru Sound. The reef at Karaka Point would have been an eco-burial site where human ashes would be placed inside a reef ball and dropped into the sea to form a reef. However, this idea was dropped after it created an uproar among local people and iwi.

During the resource consent hearing, Mr Barker said Koi Point and Kaipapa Bay were good places for the reefs, which would be used for education, research and development.

He told the committee that Queen Charlotte College was prepared to commit ongoing support to the project and scientists at New Zealand universities were also supportive. However, Mr Barker did not have any documentation to back up his claims.

Submitter Dr Lionel Solly of the Department of Conservation said the department could see the benefit of artificial reefs but said there was not enough information to show Koi Point and Kaipapa Bay were the right places for the reefs.

Resource management officer Keith Heather said more information was needed on the establishment, management and ongoing monitoring of the project. But Mr Barker said the design of the reefs was "new science" and had to start somewhere.

Yesterday Mr Barker said he would not be taking the project any further, despite having spent nearly \$6000 to get this far.

"I believed in it. Someone will pick it up again, maybe in five or six years time."

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