

Evidence of Monarch Wildlife Cruises Ltd (submitter No 107) on Hearing for Application No's RM 10.193- RM 10.200, RM 10.202 - RM 10.203, RM 10.205 and 2000.472/1 Port Otago Ltd - Various Coastal Activities, Port Chalmers and Otago Harbour

We support these applications in their entirety and applaud Port Otago Ltd for their initiative in developing the port facilities for present and future generations. Throughout the province's European history the port has been a vital part of the commerce and prosperity of the region and we consider that is vital for Port Otago Ltd, Dunedin, Otago (and indeed the whole lower South Island) to have a modern, profitable and viable port facility.

As we operate an ecotourism business on the Otago Harbour, adjoining coastal waters and Otago Peninsula we have a keen interest in preserving this unique and fragile environment and the very special and internationally significant wildlife that abounds in this area.

Our concerns regarding these matters have been addressed in the AEE and in the recommended consent conditions of the ORC staff recommending report for the dredging and disposal of dredging spoil.

Specifically these are :

- Effects on tidal range and tidal current within the Otago Harbour (particularly the channel) and Harbour entrance area.
- Effects of the dredging activity on sediment accretion in the peripheral areas of the Harbour.
- Effects of the dredging, dredging spoil disposal and associated activities on the environmental and ecosystem values of the Harbour, Harbour entrance and adjoining coastal waters. Our specific issues in this regard relate to the highly important bird life and marine mammal populations in these areas and the biota which support these.

We believe Port Otago Ltd (and its predecessor Otago Harbour Board) has a good history of protecting key environmental values in its past dredging activities. I have some knowledge of this having been involved in environmental management for a number of years and having written the ORC staff recommending report (including, monitoring and associated conditions to avoid, remedy or mitigate against adverse environmental effects) on Port Otago Ltd's maintenance dredging and dredge spoil dumping some years ago.

With regard to the process of investigation for an application for these particular consents I am concerned by the emotive and ill informed approach taken by some organisations and individuals who suggest that significant environmental and ecological damage will arise from these activities. This approach, in my view, ignores the significant environmental, ecological, and hydrological studies that have been carried out to support the application, the recommended consent conditions proposed by the ORC and the past history of Port Otago Ltd with regard to dredging and dredge spoil dumping and shows a lack of understanding of the technical issues involved. Furthermore natural perturbations have in the past and will in the future modify the environment to a significantly greater extent than the relatively puny efforts of humankind. (one has only to look at recent events in Christchurch and Japan).

One matter that is of remaining concern is that of improving all tide access to a number of areas within the Harbour (i.e. Careys Bay, Back Beach, improvement to the Eastern Channel, Quarantine Island etc) as part of this major capital dredging project.

Whilst appreciating that this may be outside the scope of the specific channel dredging work proposed there would seem to be no better time to make a commitment to this work to improve the amenity values of the Harbour for present and future generations. Indeed such works are entirely consistent with the vision statement of the owner of Port Otago Ltd (Otago Regional Council) and I believe a good case could be made that the Otago Regional Council has a legal (or at the very least moral) responsibility to carry out such work. Our concerns could be satisfied by a condition on any consents granted requiring either or both Port Otago Ltd or Otago Regional to provide all tide access to these areas for a 2 to 3 metre draft vessel within 5 years.

John Milburn

OWNER

Monarch Wildlife Cruises Ltd

8 April 2011