

# Opito and Matapaua Bays Community Plan



*Opito and Matapaua are small coastal communities located at lovely beaches. People have bought here because of the non-commercial nature and this must be preserved – in particular these beaches should not become mainstream tourist destinations. While we appreciate that some development is likely to occur we feel that any development should not be in conflict with or adversely impact the rural lifestyle and culture that has been captured and enhanced. In particular, all future development should recognise national and regional policies in respect of protecting outstanding landscapes and historical sites, and recommendations in relation to coastal setbacks, protection of dunes and likely changes arising from climate change.*

*Developments should also recognize modern trends and best practices in relation to development within small, unique coastal communities. We also oppose any changes to current zoning that would enable additional development beyond that currently allowed.*

**June 2009**

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# Community Plan

## Why do a Community Plan?

As a short to medium term initiative for the communities of Opito and Matapaua Bays, the community plan will:

- Focus community debate and get people involved in making decisions and taking responsibility for our communities.
- Set direction and common goals, promote consensus and avoid division.
- Safeguard the community and the environment from exploitation.
- Capture all good ideas and identify initiatives suitable for external funding.
- Assist Mercury Bay Community Board decision-making and allow more effective use of ratepayer funds.
- Ensure the small settlements are able to develop facilities that suit the area.
- Help avoid haphazard development.
- Help influence Thames Coromandel District Council's programme of works during its annual and long-term planning processes.
- Show opportunities for individuals and groups to develop new projects and provide goods and services.

Reporting on this Plan each year will enable the community to record achievements and to check that the identified priorities are still correct. It will also be a chance to include new information and new ideas.

## How will this Community Plan work?

This Community Plan is a collection of aspirations and priorities for future directions. It is a community-owned document and provides a framework to be used to guide decision making for local planning purposes. For example, individuals and groups who may be wishing to undertake a community project could use the Community Plan to determine priorities for action or to support their requests for external funding.

As part of the Council's planning process, the Mercury Bay Community Board will use this Plan to determine local priorities and to recommend future work programmes to council. The Thames Coromandel District Council will take into account the principles and priorities as outlined in the Community Plan when deciding its annual and longer-term work programmes. The Council will use the Community Plan as a basis for developing policies for desired growth within the District.

The plan will be used to secure support from within and outside the community for funding for specific projects and will be reported on regularly to the Community Board and the public. Annual reporting will enable success to be measured and information to be checked and updated.

There is opportunity for involvement at every stage of the process. The Community Board will take an active role in promoting the Plan to the community and where appropriate, facilitating project development.

Others who have an interest in the future of the area may find the Community Plan a useful reference guide. These include:

- Government Agencies
- Other Councils
- Developers/Investors
- Visitors and Tourists

## Who will have access to the plan?

This Community Plan is available from the local Council Office at 10 Monk Street, Whitianga or by telephoning Council on 07 867 2010.

## How will progress and success be measured?

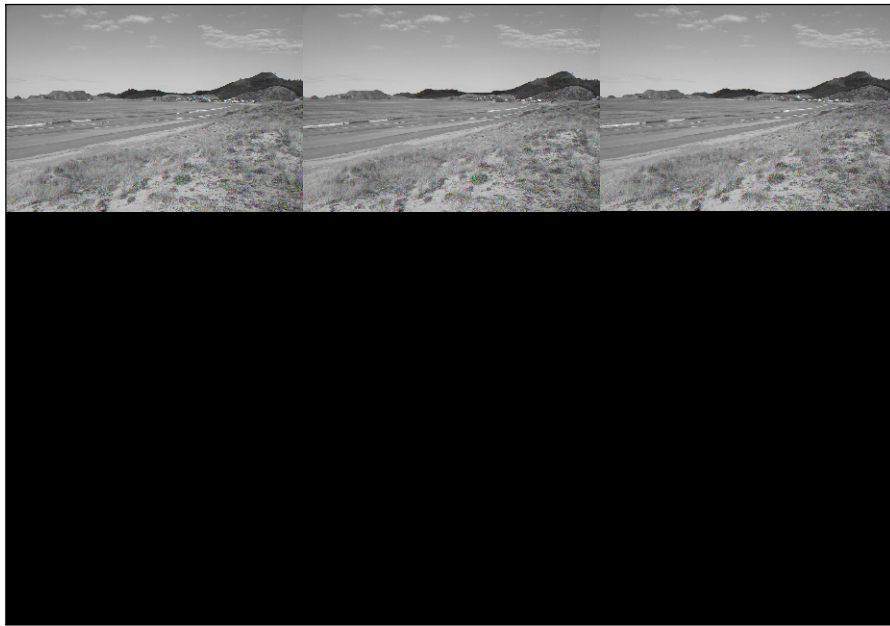
A central record of activity will be kept at the District Council office, 10 Monk Street, Whitianga and through the Mercury Bay Community Board. Progress will be reported to the community annually. Maintaining the integrity of the Plan and monitoring its use is a necessary part of the implementation. A review of the Plan's highest priorities will be carried out by the Community Board at a time to coincide with the preparation of Council's annual plan budgeting process.

A major review of this Community Plan will be undertaken every three years to coincide with the review of Council's LTCCP process. This will involve public consultation and input.

## How can new ideas be incorporated?

The Community Plan has been arranged like a workbook so that an individual or group may use it to keep a record of their activity and ideas. The central record of activity, maintained by Council, will form the basis of the annual report to the community and the Community Board.

All comments on or contributions to this Community Plan should be made to the Thames Coromandel District Council's Mercury Bay Area Manager, 10 Monk Street, Whitianga.



*View of Opito Bay*

## **Description of our Community**

### **Introduction**

Otama, Opito and Matapaua Bays, in the Kuaotunu Peninsula area, contain small pockets of coastal development surrounded by pasture, commercial forestry and bush covered hills. Over many years these coastal settlements have become popular destinations for holiday home owners and visitors alike.

Growth management has been identified as a key issue for the future of the Thames-Coromandel District. As part of addressing this, the Thames-Coromandel District Council has prepared information on development and population trends for settlements in the District, including some of the smaller settlements such as Otama, Opito and Matapaua Bays. A key tenet of the District plan identifies seven coastal settlements where future development will be concentrated – Opito and Matapaua Bays are not among these.

With some 250 sections developed over approximately 50 years, Opito and Matapaua have been able to maintain unique characteristics as a small, uncrowded, undeveloped environment, catering to those who value these attributes over the more urbanised and commercial centres such as Matarangi, Whitianga and Pauanui. It goes without saying that preservation of these characteristics is a major focus for the Community, who also value the natural environment and historical and archaeological heritage sites that are to be found throughout the Bay.

### **What is there at the moment?**

At the time of the 2006 Census, Otama, Opito and Matapaua Bays had a combined usually resident population (all people who usually live in the area) of 66 people (census night: 7 March 2006). This was an increase of 12 people since 2001.

In terms of development trends, the bays consist predominantly of small pockets of coastal development surrounded by production pine forest covered hills and pastoral farming.

In 2006, there were 249 dwellings and undeveloped sections in the Otama, Opito and Matapaua bays area. This was an increase of 18 since 2001.

On the night of the 2006 Census, only 18% of dwellings in the area were occupied. This reflects the area's status as a popular holiday destination with a high proportion of holiday homes and baches.

## **Land Use Planning under the District Plan**

### **Opito Bay**

Most of the existing coastal-residential zoned land has already been developed for residential purposes. The remaining areas of coastal-residential zoned land are subject to structure plans (a plan that allows for development of an area with specific controls). The structure plan over land at the Northern end of Opito Bay is currently subject to legal challenge in relation to the status of the structure plan.

### **Matapaua Bay**

The small pocket of coastal-residential zoned land at Matapaua Bay is developed to capacity under the Proposed District Plan's rules. A structure plan to the west of the Bay protects a significant amount of coastal bush and allows for the development of 14 house lots for which resource consent has been granted with an approved coastal public walkway access to the coastal bays. This is called "The Glades". The remaining area of the Bay is covered by the Opito to Matapaua Structure Plan.

## What about the future?

### Opito Bay

The stunning coastal views and rural backdrop of Opito Bay and Matapaua Bay make this area a desirable place to own a property, the majority of these being holiday homes. It is anticipated the bay is expected to remain a holiday destination with only a small number of permanent residents.

Development within the Opito Bay settlement and the surrounding area will lead to limited population growth if the current ratio of holiday to permanent homes remains steady.

Any future development will also need to recognise the limitations of the Opito environment. For instance, the boat launching facilities, Blackjack Road, foreshore road, storm and waste water capabilities cannot handle significant growth in the numbers currently experienced over the peak holiday seasons (Christmas, New Year, Easter, Labour Weekend). With many sections hosting four, five or more cars and their occupants and one or more boats during these periods, it is perceived by some that any significant increase will pose a real danger to residents, particularly small children.

### Matapaua Bay

According to the existing structure plans, development within "The Glades" is limited to 14 residential lots. Some development could occur in the remaining Coastal zoned area but may be limited by topography, District Plan provisions including the Structure Plan for Opito to Matapaua.

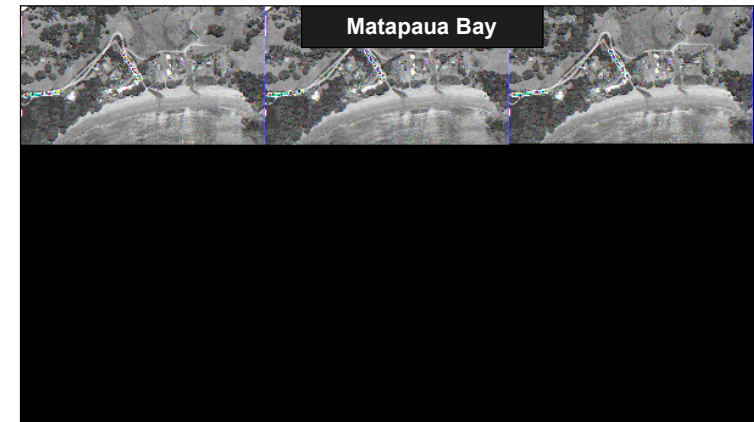
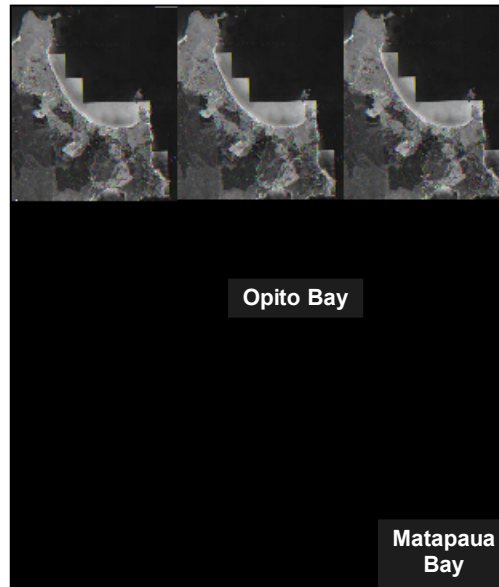
It is anticipated that this area will largely remain a holiday destination with only a small number of residents.

## Opito Bay Demographics

While the Mercury Bay Community Board area has experienced steady, high growth since 1996, this has largely been concentrated in those centres earmarked for development, particularly Whitianga. Opito has shown a steady increase over time since it was first settled in the 1940's. The proportion of permanent residents has decreased over this time as the development of holiday homes has increased.

Over the peak summer period, Mercury Bay experiences high numbers of tourists and visitors, as well as part time residents and usual residents. The *2007/08 Peak Population Study* produced by TCDC found that the population of Whitianga increased 4.7% from the township's usually resident population during the Christmas and New Year holiday period – an estimated peak population of 18,600 people.

## Opito and Matapaua Bays



## Our process so far

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Number</b>
7 March 2007	Notice to ratepayers to advise of forthcoming meeting	Approx 310
22 & 29 March 2007	Public Notice – Bay Notes in The Bay Beacon advertising forthcoming community planning meeting	
8 April 2007	Public meeting held at Sean O’Sullivan’s Garage, 88 Opito Bay Rd	Approximately 70 attendees
April	Draft plan compiled from information from public meeting	
9 July 2007	Meeting with committee members	Approx 13
31 July 2007	Notice to all ratepayers to advise draft document available for comments	Approx 310
29 October 2007	Working group considered submissions and amended plan	4 (17 invited)
9 November 2007	Letter with amended draft plan sent to all on working group	16
January 2008	Review by OBRA Committee	
March 2008	Revised plan posted on OBRA website ratepayers contacted either by mail or email to invite comments	Approx 250
September 2008	Revised plan incorporating comments posted on OBRA website, and mail / email contacts sent to ratepayers	Approx 250
November 2008	Revised plan incorporating comments sent to OBRA Committee and TCDC	
May 2009	Final amendments completed as per OBRA requests	
June 2009	FINAL Plan received by the Mercury Bay Community Board	



## Key areas of focus



## Plan Details

### Social

*Community Wellbeing - Health / Education / Safe Communities / Community*

#### What do we have?

- Rural Fire and First Response.
- Emergency services at Opito – defibrillator and First Aid.
- Civil Defence covered by existing services / personnel.
- A trained Search and Rescue team.
- Education at Kuaotunu, Whitianga and Te Rerenga.
- Health services in Whitianga.

#### What do we want?

- Vehicle access to beach in designated areas at Opito; otherwise enforce rules – status quo.
- Emergency Management System.
- Continuation of rural fire, first response and emergency services.
- Health services to remain in Whitianga.
- Continuation of rural delivery mail service.
- No street lighting.
- Matapaua Bay properties to maintain the existing access points to Matapaua Beach.
- Continued involvement from the community in ensuring effective and pragmatic application of the by-laws.

#### What don't we want?

- Streetlights.
- Vehicles on beach in non designated areas.
- To lose any of the current services.
- New vehicular access to Matapaua Beach except in an emergency.

### PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Issue	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agency	Priority/Timeline		
				09/10	11/13	15/20
Emergency Management.	Prepare a defined Plan.	EMGp Rural Fire Coastguard.	DoC	√		

## Economic

### *The business world - Retail / Service Industry / Industry / Tourism*

#### What do we have?

- A mix of land use including pastoral farming and commercial forestry.
- Commercial operators for fresh fish and shellfish.
- Lack of traction seal and poor road conditions to enable rural servicing.
- All services in Whitianga and Kuaotunu.
- Unsealed roads.
- Campground at Otama.
- Public toilets at Opito.
- Limited local B & B accommodation.

#### What do we want?

- To retain rural delivery mail service.
- Signage for dump station for campervans and campers.
- Whitianga to remain as main service centre.
- Continuation of limited B & B type accommodation.
- A safe road – particularly during logging activity.
- Licensed mobile street vendors - that provide a service to Opito residents' (e.g., fresh, short life products).
- Better management and maintenance of roading.
- Improved roading access and infrastructure.

#### What don't we want?

- Motels or commercial development in Opito.
- A formal camping ground or camping area – use Otama as per status quo.
- Retail outlets, shops or services.
- Campervan facilities.
- Concessions at Matapaua Bay.
- Commercial fishing in the bays.

#### PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Issue	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agency	Priority/Timeline		
				09/10	11/13	15/20
Unclear signage.	Review all by-law and road signage.	TCDC			√	
Unsafe roads.	Better maintenance regime, particularly prior to and during forestry operations.	TCDC Contractor		Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
The number and type of licenses / concessions.	Clear definition in Reserve Management Plan and by-law controls.	TCDC	DoC	√	Ongoing	Ongoing

## Environmental (surroundings we live in)

### *Infrastructure / Bush, Streams & Coastline / Land Use / Reserve Management / Waste Management*

#### **Infrastructure – roading, energy, telecommunications, water, stormwater, wastewater**

##### **What do we have?**

- Poorly maintained roads.
- Vodafone mast.
- Marine Radio Service (repeater).
- Some inadequate storm water control/management.
- Limited footpaths.
- A reliance on road side swales for storm water soakage.
- Reticulated storm water system on Skippers Road, Ohinau Drive, Thompson Place, Calder Place and Stewart Place.
- A public telephone in Opito Bay with limited cell phone and radio reception.
- Most properties use on-site wastewater treatment and disposal systems.
- Both private and community reticulated wastewater systems.
- Reliance on individual property owners for their own water supply and quality.
- Mostly underground power in Opito.
- Low overhead power line on Skippers Rd.
- Unsealed urban road (Skippers Road).

##### **What do we want?**

- Better signage on Black Jack Rd (e.g. 'give way to uphill traffic').
- Targeted road improvements leading to ultimate/eventual sealing of Black Jack Rd – review request to make the road safer in view of current dangerous state.
- Sealing of Skippers Road.
- Lack of capacity in stormwater system rectified including swales.
- Road verges and pedestrian access ways to be sprayed for Onehunga weed.
- Noxious weed control especially on road verges.
- Removal of exotic plants and trees and a programme of native planting.
- An improved maintenance regime to sealed and unsealed roads.
- Safe pedestrian routes.
- Drains and culverts regularly cleaned including Stewarts Creek and Waitaha Stream.
- Specific rules in the District Plan covering non-porous areas of sections, as they impact on storm water.
- More reliable power supply.
- A programme to put all overhead power lines underground at Opito Bay.
- There is not at this time a consensus in the community in respect of sealing of Blackjack Road. At the community meeting last year there was an even split and this plan should reflect that division of opinion. It was suggested at the meeting to leave it open-ended because the issue was too important to decide on the spot. There is unanimous support for improvement in maintenance and upgrading of the gravel road.

##### **What don't we want?**

- Reticulated water.
- Concrete footpaths.
- Street lights.

## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Issue	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agency	Priority/Timeline		
				09/10	11/13	15/20
Poorly maintained roads.	Better maintenance regime to sealed and unsealed roads.	TCDC Contractor		√	Ongoing	Ongoing
Sealing of unsealed roads.	A programme developed for the sealing of selected roads at Opito Bay.	TCDC Contractor				
Lack of capacity in storm water system.	1/ Better maintenance of swales.	TCDC		√	Ongoing	Ongoing
	2/ Changes to the District Plan to regulate non-porous surfaces.				√	Ongoing
Encroachment of plant and animal pests.	Develop and implement a programme with all agencies for the eradication / control of all animal and plant pests.	EW	TCDC DoC Private land owners RMG's Animal Health Board		√	Ongoing
Safe pedestrian routes.	Onehunga weed spraying of road verges and public walkways.	TCDC Contractor		√	Ongoing	Ongoing

## **Bush / Streams / Coastline**

### **What do we have?**

- Boats, jet skis, water skiers, fishermen and kayakers.
- Threat to the regeneration of native trees from wilding pines.
- Animal pest and plant control carried out by DoC in some areas.
- Kiwi sanctuary towards Waitaia.
- Existing nesting grounds for dotterels at Opito and Matapaua.
- Commercial long line and scallop harvesting encroaching into the bay.
- Revegetating native bush.
- Safe clean swimming beaches.
- Strip of coastline being Crown Land, reserved from sale.

### **What do we want?**

- Riparian management to maintain clean streams, run off from farms and forestry.
- Management of wastewater systems to avoid seepage causing nuisance to neighbours.
- To implement an animal and plant pest management programme – including more pest control (possums, stoats, feral cats, rats, wilding pines to protect and enhancement of native flora and fauna).
- Dune Management Plan incorporating education to address inappropriate planting and to stop the throwing away of grass cuttings.
- Cleaner streams and effective cleaning of water that goes to the sea. No polluted water should be allowed to enter the beach area i.e. if storm water is polluted; it must be cleaned prior to allowing it to enter the sea. As the plan suggests keeping the streams open, we are allowing silt, clay, chemical sprays and animal waste to enter the seabed.
- Protection of dotterel nesting areas.
- Consideration for a coastal walkway network around the Kuaotunu Peninsula linking inland public reserves.
- Maintain stream exits so they do not impact on the dune system.
- Identification of walkways and public areas.

### **What don't we want?**

- Ski lanes.
- Inappropriate planting of dunes (e.g., impact on views).
- Deterioration of endangered species e.g. dotterel.
- Deterioration of natural grasses which protect the sand dunes and prevent erosion.
- Clogged streams.
- Deterioration of water quality.
- Mining.

## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Issue	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agency	Priority/Timeline		
				09/10	11/13	15/20
Lack of coastal walkways and linkages to other public reserve land.	Ongoing liaison with all agencies and landowners to progress. Identification of existing walkways and public land.	TCDC	EW DoC Private land owners Iwi, Public	√	Ongoing	Ongoing
Protection of streams and water quality.	1/ Set in place protection of all riparian margins. 2/ Ensure river mouth kept open.	EW	DoC Private land owners	√	Ongoing	Ongoing
Protection and enhancement of dunes.	Develop and implement a Dune Management Programme including education as a key component.	EW	TCDC	√	Ongoing	Ongoing

### Land Use

#### What do we have?

- Development of coastal settlements controlled by and in accordance with the current District Plan.
- Protected off shore islands.

#### What do we want?

- Reserve contributions should be retained in land and not exchanged for cash.
- Residential development should follow current trends and best practices to minimise impact on the environment. Particular care should be taken to blend with the environment with the provision of native bush plantings.
- Implementation of appropriate standards in respect of impermeable surface area on lots.
- Adherence to national and regional guidelines for coastal setbacks and development within areas of outstanding natural beauty.
- Maximum possible protection for the character and nature of Opito Bay as it currently stands. To retain residential beach community with one house per lot rule – low density. To maintain current minimum lot size of approximately 800m<sup>2</sup>.
- Fairer distribution of Reserve Contributions / Development Fees into the area where collected.
- No changes to current zoning that would allow further development.
- Community input into any proposed development through notification and direct consultation.
- To retain the green backdrop.
- Consideration of your neighbours and those affected by tree plantings.

### What don't we want?

- High rise above 8 metres.
- Commercial activity i.e. hotels / motels.
- More coastal residential zoned land.
- High density development (sections less than 800m2).
- Unsustainable impact from development on existing infrastructure and people (particularly Boat Launching, roads, waste and storm water).
- Impact on sites of Archaeological and / or Historical interest.
- Impact on view lines through development on elevated sites.

### PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Issue	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agency	Priority/Timeline		
				09/10	11/13	15/20
Retain one house per lot.	Administer The District Plan rules.	TCDC		√	Ongoing	Ongoing

### *Reserve Management*

#### What do we have?

- Concession licensee running dive trips.
- A large dune system.
- Two land and two beach concessions from two reserves.
- DoC Pa site at Opito point.

#### What do we want?

- Reserve Contributions / Development Fees spent in the area where collected.
- Consultation on planting of trees on Council land that may impact on views.
- Protection for existing native trees from vandalism to enhance individual views.
- Vehicles on reserves to be controlled by signage and in designated areas only.
- Linkages between reserves.
- An operative Reserve Management Plan.
- Mown public reserve and roadside areas sprayed for Onehunga weed.
- Substantial reserves with parking and signage at the north end of the bay as well as a boat ramp at that end.
- The formation of Te Paki point(Tokarahu Pt) into a reserve mirroring Opito Point at the south end
- Consideration for a coastal walkway network around the Kuaotunu Peninsula linking inland public reserves with priority to linking Matapaua Bay to Opito Bay.

#### What don't we want?

- Reserve plantings damaged or destroyed.
- Illegal removal of trees.
- Additional concessions operating from reserves.



## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Issue	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agency	Priority/Timeline		
				09/10	11/13	15/20
Management and enhancement of reserves.	Complete Reserve Management Plan review.	TCDC	DoC	√		

### *Waste Management*

#### What do we have?

- Molok recycling facilities.
- Weekly rubbish collection.

#### What do we want?

- To retain and enhance moloks.
- To continue with tree dump.
- Signage for dump station at Matarangi / Whitianga.
- Bylaw enforcement to prevent illegal dumping.
- Retention of current collection service.

#### What don't we want?

- Decrease in current services.

## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Issue	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agency	Priority/Timeline		
				09/10	11/13	15/20
Clearer signage	Review all by-laws and road signage	TCDC			√	

## Cultural

### *Who we are as a community - Recreation & Leisure / Arts / Heritage*

#### **What do we have?**

- Parking on reserves at Opito.
- Kids fishing on the wharf at Stewart Stream.
- Community hall, library and tennis courts at Kuaotunu.
- Limited moorings at both Opito and Matapaua.
- Boats, jet skis, water skiers, recreational fishing and kayakers.
- Defined boat access area in four locations on the beach.
- Historic sites within the bay.
- Three tribes with a recognized interest in Opito Bay.
- Boat launching from the beach.
- A network of public lands on Kuaotunu Peninsula, coastal reserves and inland reserves.
- Non-residents returning for holiday periods, often resulting in a large number of people per property.

#### **What do we want?**

- Better signage on beach access.
- Improved access for boat launching at Opito.
- Identification of 200 meter limit on water.
- Safer walking tracks – better pedestrian linkages.
- Operative Reserve Management Plan.
- Consideration for a coastal walkway network around the Kuaotunu Peninsula and linkages to inland walkways and reserves.
- Clarity in respect of boat launching and parking provisions.
- North end reserves and a boat launching access point to accommodate new development and minimise impact on existing access areas.
- Bylaw enforcement in peak period.

#### **What don't we want?**

- Active reserves, tennis courts or playgrounds.
- A community hall / centre.
- A defined ski lane.
- An increase in concession numbers.
- Section usage in excess of existing Bylaws.

## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Issue	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agency	Priority/Timeline		
				09/10	11/13	15/20
Boat launching and retrieval on beach.	Complete Reserve Management Plan review.	TCDC	DoC	√		
Safe swimming area.	Define 200 meter limit off shore.	EW		√	Ongoing	Ongoing
Recognise and value our history.	Work with locals and Ngati Hei and other interested tribes to record history.	Community Ngati Hei Other interested tribes		√		



*View of Opito Bay and off shore islands.*