



Issue - Recognising and protecting our unique environment

Summary of the Information

26 November 2009

Issue Statement

The Kaikoura Canyon together with the landforms of the Kaikoura Mountains form a natural feature of international significance. Currently this area as a whole has no formal recognition or special protection.

Our Vision

Our vision is that our place is recognised by the world and that what makes our environment so special is protected from harm.

Current Knowledge

The canyon itself is part of a landscape that can best be considered as part of the unique combination of land and sea, with the Kaikoura ranges rising steeply inland and the deep waters of the canyon dropping sharply seaward. Together with the nutrient rich water upwelling from the depths close inshore, this adds a richness of wildlife and biota rare in the world. The Department of Conservation has listed the Kaikoura canyon and Kaikoura landscape as a potential World Heritage site.

The canyons in Kaikoura hold a special significance to the people of Ngati Kuri. They say that “*The ocean is known as Te Tai o Marokura or the sea of Marokura. Marokura was the atua who with his magical patu, carved the underwater trenches and canyons, which is*

why we have our whales here, off our shoreline. The underwater trenches also connect up back to where we first came from. It was Paikea the whale rider, who come on the back of the whale from Hawaiki along the whale route. He arrived here along the east coast of the North Island. He had two sons, one of those son's was Tahu Potiki the ancestor of Ngai Tahu. Tahu people traveled down the east coast of the North island and settled in Kaikoura where we are still today. The Hikurangi trench is what connects us to where we came from some 700 years ago."

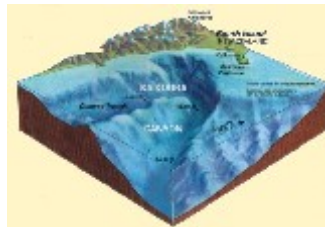
What is it that needs recognising?

Put simply Kaikoura is one of those special places in the world that deserves international recognition. While it is the whole thing that really makes Kaikoura stands out in the world for:

1. Its sheer beauty, the way those snow capped mountains stand so close to the restless sea separated by a thin band of green cultivated land.



2. The wonder of this deep sea canyon so close to the coastline.



3. The outstanding abundance and diversity of marine life flourishing in the nutrient rich upwelling of deep oceanic water.

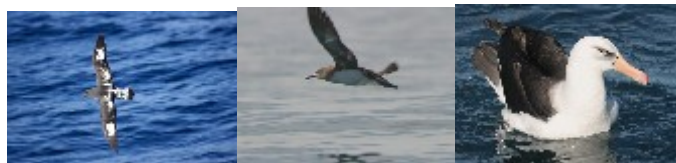


4. The great diversity of marine habitats in a small geographic area.

5. The whales and dolphins, in great numbers and diversity, with great whales such as sperm whales seen here so reliably by visitors.



6. The second highest number of seabird species ever counted around New Zealand, a country more deservedly known for its seabird diversity than for its famous land birds.



7. As the site that characterises New Zealand in its current mountain building phase so well that our time (24 million years of it) is known as the Kaikoura Orogeny.

What is it that needs protecting?

The World Heritage Advisory Committee commented that there were *major integrity and management issues that would need to be addressed before a potential World Heritage site could be defined and added to New Zealand's tentative list.*

At present the Committee noted that Kaikoura has:

1. No formal marine protected areas.
2. Lack of protected lowland of high natural character linking the protected mountains to the sea.
3. Lack of integrated planning for the area.

But what is it that really needs protecting.

1. The productive capacity of the marine environment to support the abundance of wildlife, fish and marine mammals.
2. Some parts of the marine environment that people leave intact so we can know how they might more naturally be and so that we can enjoy them.
3. The habitat of the species that we most value just for being there - the whales and birds.
4. The beauty of the coast and its protection from inappropriate and ugly development.
5. The quality of the environment - the clarity of the water and the air and places of natural quiet.

The landforms as a whole do not need protecting as such. We are not about to tear down the mountains or fill in the canyon. But we can destroy the life they hold and it is within our power to forever mar their beauty.

What can we do?

Recognition and protection of what makes Kaikoura unique can be enhanced in many ways. Foremost in international recognition is the status conferred under widely recognised conventions such as World Heritage and Ramsar. Other ways are to improve the information available to the world or the gain recognition under other awards and conventions. Protection can be achieved by legal means and by other processes such as education and understanding. In New Zealand legal protection is available for the things that make Kaikoura unique under the:

- Resource Management Act (land and sea)
- Marine Reserves Act (sea)
- Marine Mammals Protection (sea and species)
- Wildlife Act(land, sea and species)
- Fisheries Act (sea and species)
- Reserves Act (land and intertidal)
- National Parks Act (land and intertidal)

World Heritage/The Convention

World Heritage is the designation for places on earth that are of outstanding universal value to humanity and as such, have been inscribed on the World Heritage List to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. Places as diverse and unique as the Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, Galapagos Islands in Ecuador, the Taj Mahal in India, the Grand Canyon in the USA, or the Acropolis in Greece are examples of the 890 natural and cultural places inscribed on the World Heritage List to date.

What does it mean for a site to be inscribed on the List?

Once a country signs the Convention, and has sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, the resulting prestige often helps raise awareness among citizens and governments for heritage preservation. Greater awareness leads to a general rise in the level of the protection and conservation given to heritage properties. A country may also receive financial assistance and expert advice from the World Heritage Committee to support activities for the preservation of its sites.

What is the Convention?

The **Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage** is an international agreement that was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972. It is based on the premise that certain places on Earth are of outstanding universal value and should therefore form part of the common heritage of mankind. The countries who ratify the Convention (States Parties) have become part of an international community, united in a common mission to identify and safeguard our world's most outstanding natural and cultural heritage. While fully respecting the national sovereignty, and without prejudice to property rights provided by national legislation, the countries recognize that the protection of the World Heritage is the duty of the international community as a whole.

What are the legal implications of the Convention?

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention is a treaty that has become, over the past 30 years, the foremost international legal tool in support of the conservation of the world's cultural and natural heritage. Today, 186 countries (called States Parties) have ratified the Convention, making it an almost universally accepted set of principles and framework of action.

The World Heritage List

Who owns a site once it's inscribed on the World Heritage List?

The site is the property of the country on whose territory it is located, but it is considered in the interest of the international community to protect the site for future generations. Its protection and preservation becomes a concern of the international World Heritage community as a whole.

The Nomination of Sites

How is a site inscribed on the List?

A site goes through a nomination process before being considered for inscription by the World Heritage Committee. A site can be proposed for inscription only by the country in which the property is located.

Who nominates sites?

Countries submit nomination proposals to the World Heritage Committee. If the Committee determines, based on the recommendations of its Advisory Bodies (ICOMOS and IUCN), that the nomination meets at least one of the necessary criteria, then the property proposed by the State Party is inscribed on the World Heritage List. In general, the Committee adds about 25-30 sites per year to the list. Today there are 890 sites on the list, located in 141 countries around the world.

What are the criteria for nominating a site?

There are 10 criteria for the nomination of World Heritage Sites.

Four selection criteria might apply to Kaikoura:

- *to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;*
- *to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;*
- *to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;*

- *to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.*

The protection, management, authenticity and integrity of properties are also important considerations.

The DOC report said that Kaikoura could contain a suitable site because of its outstanding universal values with respect to underwater landforms, tectonic uplift and marine life.

Current New Zealand World Heritage Sites

- Te Wahipounamu - South West New Zealand
- Tongariro National Park
- New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands

Example of the how the criteria can be fulfilled:

Criterion (ix): The New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands display a pattern of immigration of species, diversifications and emergent endemism, offering particularly good opportunities for research into the dynamics of island ecology.

Criterion (x): The New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands are remarkable for their high level of biodiversity, population densities, and for endemism in birds, plants and invertebrates. The bird and plant life, especially the endemic albatrosses, cormorants, land birds and “megaherbs” are unique to the islands.

New Zealand’s tentative list

- Auckland Volcanic Fields
- Kahurangi National Park, Farewell Spit and Canaan karst system
- Kerikeri Basin historic precinct
- Kermadec Islands and Marine reserve
- Napier Art Deco historic precinct
- Waitangi Treaty Grounds historic precinct
- Waters and seabed of Fiordland (Te Moana O Atawhenua)
- Whakarua Moutere (North East Islands)

Should Kaikoura be on here as well?