

Witness Statement -Trudy Kinghan

Submitter in Opposition to FNHL Rezoning of Opuia Marine Park

I make this statement in opposition to the proposal by Far North Holdings Limited (FNHL) to rezone the Opuia Marine Park.

My family have lived as direct neighbours to these wetlands for over 30 years. During this time, I have witnessed first-hand the incredible abundance of life that these wetlands support.

- We regularly see and hear native and threatened species in and around the wetlands – including **bittern, spoonbills, weka, kiwi, kōkopu (baby Māori trout), mullet, and eels.**
- These species rely on the tidal flows and natural wetland cycles for breeding, feeding, and safe habitat. The wetlands are alive with birdsong and fish movement when the ecosystem is left undisturbed.
- The area is not just a piece of land — it is a thriving ecological community, deeply connected to the surrounding environment and valued by those who live here.

Over recent years, however, I have also witnessed the devastation caused by FNHL's actions. In particular, the installation of a **heavy-gauge floodgate across the road** has had a profound and damaging impact:

- The floodgate deliberately alters tidal flow, slowing and drying out parts of the wetland.
- Since its installation, I have seen a decline in the abundance of birdlife and fish activity. Areas that were once alive with movement and sound are now diminished.
- What was once a natural, functioning wetland ecosystem is being gradually degraded in front of my eyes.

It is heartbreaking to stand as a neighbour who has cared for and valued this wetland for three decades, and to see its destruction being engineered in the name of development. FNHL's proposal to rezone the land to mixed use — which could allow almost anything to be built here — would only accelerate this loss and permanently destroy the values that my family and community hold dear.

This wetland is not a vacant site waiting to be “activated” or “redeveloped.” It is already active — alive with native species, natural flood protection functions, and cultural value. To lose it would not only be an environmental tragedy but also a personal one for those of us who have lived alongside it and know its worth.

For these reasons, I strongly oppose the rezoning proposal and urge the Council to protect this wetland and reject FNHL's request. I attach my notes for consideration

Signed:

Trudy Kinghan

Submission Opposing Rezoning of Opuia Marine Park

Witness- Trudy Kinghan

Proposal Opposed: Far North Holdings Ltd (FNHL) – Rezoning of Opuia Marine Park to Mixed Use

1. Strategic Direction

The proposed rezoning is inconsistent with the PDP's strategic direction, which emphasizes protecting significant natural resources, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

- The Opuia Marine Park contains *functioning marine wetlands* that play a critical role in flood mitigation, water quality improvement, and biodiversity protection.
 - Rezoning to “mixed-use” introduces uncertainty and risk, allowing activities that may irreversibly destroy wetlands, undermining both the PDP and national-level strategies.
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2. Alignment with Zone Outcomes

The current zoning protects coastal margins and wetlands. The rezoning request does not align with the objectives, policies, and outcomes for these sensitive areas:

- Mixed-use zoning is incompatible with the ecological function of wetlands and residential neighbours.
 - Existing zoning recognises the natural hazard risks of flooding, erosion, and sea level rise (as shown on the *flood hazard map* you provided).
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3. Higher Order Direction

Under **s75(3) of the RMA**, plans must “give effect to” higher order instruments:

- **National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management (NPS-FM)** requires maintaining or improving freshwater quality. Wetlands are specifically listed as critical for achieving this.
 - **NZ Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS)** directs councils to protect indigenous biodiversity, preserve the natural character of coastal environments, and avoid inappropriate subdivision and use.
 - **Regional Policy Statement** (Northland) emphasizes protection of wetlands, floodplains, and indigenous ecosystems. Rezoning to mixed-use directly contradicts this.
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4. Reasons for the Request

The applicant has not demonstrated why the current zoning is inappropriate. Instead, the reasons appear to be economic rather than environmental or planning-based.

- No evidence has been provided that the current zoning prevents appropriate use of the land consistent with its ecological values.
 - **Importantly, FNHL already owns a large site just a few hundred metres away that could be redeveloped and intensified without threatening wetlands or floodplains.** The existence of this alternative makes rezoning of Opuia Marine Park entirely unnecessary and undermines any justification based on business needs.
 - Economic benefit to FNHL does not outweigh the environmental, cultural, and social costs of wetland loss.
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5. Assessment of Site Suitability and Potential Effects of Rezoning

The site is *not suitable* for rezoning due to:

- **Natural hazard risk:** The flood hazard map shows the site sits within zones of **50-year and 100-year flood events** and subject to coastal erosion. This makes intensive development highly inappropriate.
 - **Ecological importance:** Wetlands act as “kidneys” of the environment, filtering pollutants, trapping sediments, absorbing floodwaters, storing carbon, and providing breeding grounds for fish and birds.
 - **Biodiversity values:** The wetlands are home to **bittern (nationally threatened), spoonbills, weka, kiwi, kōkopu (native trout), mullet, and eels** – all of which rely on tidal flows and wetland function. The deliberate installation of a floodgate to alter water flows has already negatively impacted habitat health. Further rezoning would accelerate degradation.
 - **Cultural values:** Wetlands are *taonga* to Māori, valued for mahinga kai (food gathering), biodiversity, and as wāhi tapu. Destruction of wetlands undermines Treaty principles of partnership and kaitiakitanga.
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6. Infrastructure (Three Waters) Servicing

The proposal would impose **substantial and costly infrastructure demands**:

- Keeping flood-prone land dry would require **significant engineered drainage, pumping, and stormwater works**, which is contrary to the PDP objective of avoiding costly infrastructure in hazard-prone areas.
 - Such works would shift flooding risk to surrounding residential properties, creating long-term liability for FNDC.
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7. Consultation and Further Submissions

- There is **no evidence of meaningful consultation with tangata whenua**.
- Local consultation also appears minimal. The proposal has not adequately considered community concerns regarding flooding, biodiversity loss, and amenity effects.

8. Section 32AA Evaluation

The rezoning is not the most appropriate, effective, or efficient way to achieve PDP objectives:

- Maintaining wetlands provides multiple ecosystem services – water purification, carbon sequestration, climate resilience, and biodiversity – at **no cost to council**.
- Rezoning to mixed use would destroy these services, create ongoing infrastructure liabilities, and degrade freshwater quality, contrary to the **NPS-FM Objective A2**: “to maintain or improve the overall quality of freshwater within a region.”
- Allowing development would likely result in further wetland drainage, which is one of the leading causes of wetland loss in NZ.
- **Given that FNHL already has a viable site nearby for redevelopment, there is no efficiency or necessity in sacrificing an ecologically valuable wetland for development.**

Conclusion

For all the above reasons, the rezoning request should be **declined**.

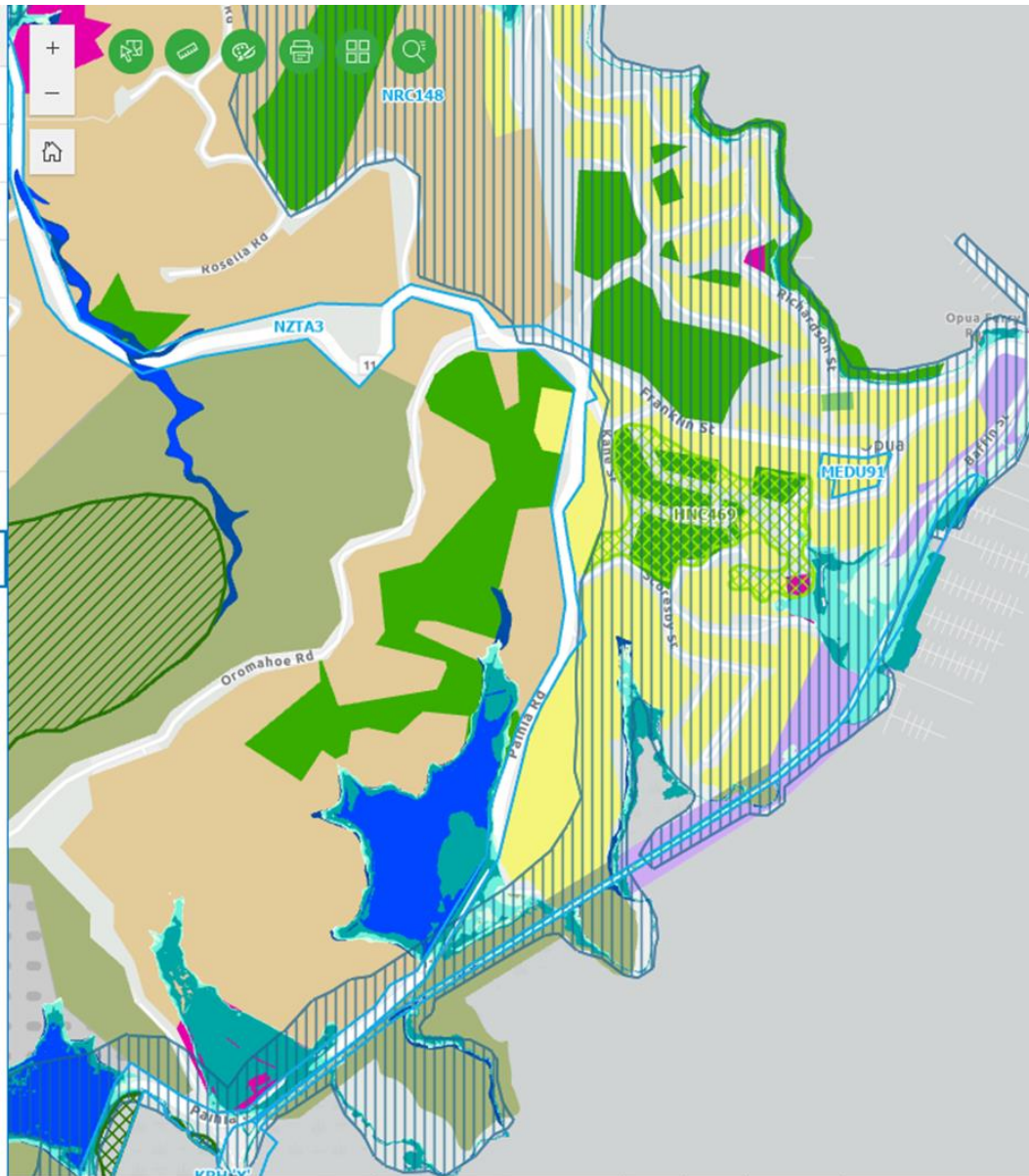
- Wetlands are nationally significant ecosystems, already reduced to less than 10% of their former extent.
- This site is demonstrably unsuitable for mixed-use development given its flood hazard, ecological values, and cultural significance.
- Retaining the current zoning ensures alignment with the RMA, the NPS-FM, the NZCPS, and the Northland Regional Policy Statement.
- FNHL’s business case does not depend on destroying this wetland, as **it has other landholdings in close proximity that can be redeveloped in a more environmentally responsible manner**.

I respectfully request that the rezoning of the area identified as Opua Marine Park be declined, and that council instead explore opportunities for wetland restoration, enhancement, and recognition as an ecological reserve.

We cannot bring back the 90% of wetlands already lost in New Zealand.

FNHL already has other land to develop. This wetland has nowhere else to go. Please don’t let it be destroyed.”

Flood Plains



Natural Hazards and Risks

Coastal Erosion (Zone 1: 50 Year Scenario)



Coastal Erosion (Zone 2: 100 Year Scenario)



Coastal Erosion (Zone 3: 100 Year + Rapid Sea Level Rise Scenario)



Coastal Flood (Zone 1: 50 Year Scenario)



Coastal Flood (Zone 2: 100 Year Scenario)



Coastal Flood (Zone 3: 100 Year + Rapid Sea Level Rise Scenario)



River Flood Hazard Zone (10 Year ARI Event)



River Flood Hazard Zone (100 Year ARI Event)

