

**07 May 2005**

## **Speech notes for Mike Lee - Chairman, Auckland Regional Council.**

The Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Helen Clarke, the Minister of Conversation, Hon. Chris Carter, Merv Maghee, Chairman of the Ngati Rehua Trust Board and elders of the Tangata Whenua Ngati Rehua, His Worship Bob Harvey, Mayor of Waitakere City, Cr Faye Storer, Chair of NHF Di Lucas, Chair of ASB Bank Community Trust, Kevin Prime, Chair GBI Community Board, Tony Bouzaid, Chair of Conservation Board, Paddy Stafford Bush, Chair of Motu Kaikoura Trust and Chair of the Motu Kaikoura Trust, Geoff Davidson.

This is a remarkable gathering of people. There are so many important people, people whom I know who have been involved with conservation in the Auckland Region. It is as if my email inbox has taken human form. The trip over must have been one of the biggest networking exercises ever held.

This literally is a time of thanks giving. The purchase into public ownership of Kaikoura Island was a long and difficult task - at times seemingly impossible - so much so that at time I felt St Jude the Patron Saint of hopeless causes must have intervened to keep the cause alive.

But good things never come easy and I want to thank all of these people, over many years who joined the cause to secure Kaikoura Island for the people of New Zealand.

First of all, D'Arcy O'Brien, the former Commissioner for Crown Lands, who tried unsuccessfully to buy the island in the 1970's for the Hauraki Maritime Park Board.

Moving forward to 1995, and while it was a little disappointing that we couldn't get ashore on the island, I personally find it very appropriate that we are holding the ceremony here at the North Barrier Boating Club because it was here that my involvement with this cause began, almost exactly ten years ago when Will Scarlett lobbied me in the bar over there.

In response, a group of us formed the Save Our Island Trust. I would like to acknowledge Whetu McGregor, Chair of the Trust Ben Dunbar-Smith, the aforesaid, Will Scarlett, Professor John Morton, Ted Lees, Hon. Phil Amos, Gordon Hodson, Lorna Cleave, Judith Voulaire, Lee Sutherland and Peter Aldridge.

Moving on to 2003 - I want to acknowledge Merv McGhee and Rawiri Wharemata of the Ngati Rehua Trust Board, also Allan McKenzie General Manager, Nature Heritage Fund, Geoff Davidson, Jim Dart and Bryan Davis of the NZ Native Restoration Trust and, of course, Brian Rudman of the NZ Herald.

Also Di Lucas, Gerry McSweeney, Jan Riddell of the Native Heritage Fund, the Nature Heritage Fund has done so much over the past fifteen years to secure natural areas and open space in public ownership, Brian Lythe Chairman of the Grants Committee and the Trustees of the ASB Bank Community Trust.

I also wish to acknowledge Auckland's local bodies led by the former Chair of the Auckland Regional Council, my good friend, Gwen Bull and Auckland's Mayors led by Bob Harvey who was a supporter of this cause from the start.

Finally, I want to thank the man who had the vision and the decisiveness to use his powers to secure this island into public ownership, Minister of Conservation, Hon. Chris Carter.

We should have no doubt that this is a significant and historic achievement. Kaikoura Island is the 8th biggest island in the Hauraki Gulf coming in just behind the famous Motutapu (and I acknowledge Chris Fletcher Chair of the Motutapu Restoration Trust who was here today,

along with John Lawrence of the Motuihe Trust and while I am acknowledging a former Mayor of Auckland, can I also acknowledge Dame Cath Tizard).

Apart from its immense scenic landscape values, which we have just experienced, Kaikoura has enormous potential for conservation restoration. The value is intrinsic but Kaikoura has enormous strategic potential as staging post in the long-term vision of a pest free Great Barrier Island which would create a wildlife reserve of international importance. We all would appreciate the significance for biodiversity and the significance for economically vital nature tourism in the Hauraki Gulf and the Auckland Region that a wildlife reserve on that scale would mean.

Today's journey is a reminder that the Auckland region is not just a slab of mainland - it is also an island region. I pointed out that Kaikoura was the 8th biggest island in the Gulf - there are more than 350 islands in the Gulf ranging from Great Barrier Island 28,000 ha to small islets and stacks. All different and valuable in their own way.

That is why the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act entered into law by this government in February 2000 has such enormous potential for the Auckland region in particular. Can we call Motu Kaikoura the anchor stone of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park? In this context, it is exciting indeed to hear of the Governments plans to breathe life into the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park referred to in the NZ Herald this morning. We wait to hear of the details of these initiatives with much interest.

This achievement was very much about partnership and leadership. Partnership with the community as exemplified by the gathering here today and personified by this unique gathering of personalities who have done so much for conservation. And leadership, leadership of this Minister and leadership of this Prime Minister.

Finally, it is important to remind ourselves that this would never have been achieved under any other government and so our enduring thanks much go to this Minister, this government and this Prime Minister.