

**Official Opening of Atiu Creek Regional Park
Saturday 5 April 2008.
ARC Chairman Michael Lee**

*E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga hau e wha,
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa,
E te Kawana Tianara tena koe.
E nga rangatira o Ngati whatua ki Kaipara tena koutou.,
E te whenua e takato ana – tena koe,
Rau rangatira ma, nga mihi nui ki a koutou, na reira tena koutou, tena koutou, tena
koutoua katoa.*

Your excellencies, the Governor General, the Honourable Anand Satyanand and Mrs Susan Satyanand.

Our great benefactors Pierre and Jackie Chatelanat,
Ben de Thierry and people of Ngati Whatua ki Kaipara, Oruawharo Marae and
Te Uri a Hau.

Sir Brian Lochore Chairman of the Queen Elizabeth 2nd National Trust,
My Regional Council colleagues Councillor Sandra Coney, Cr Christine Rose, Cr Bill
Burrill and Cr Brent Morrissey and from Rodney District Cr Graham Powell.

Distinguished guests especially Jo Ovens and her husband John.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you all for coming. It is a great honour for me to stand here today and
welcome you to what very soon will be Atiu Creek Regional Park.

The formal opening of a Regional Park is always a momentous event for the
Auckland Regional Council but this occasion and this land is more special than most
– and I will soon talk about why. But before I do so I would like to go back briefly to
the origins of the Auckland Regional Parks network.

In the late 1950s – early 1960s visionary regional leaders like Sir Dove Meyer
Robinson and Mr F.W.O Jones of the new established Auckland Regional Authority
foresaw the need to acquire parkland for the recreational needs of the growing
population of the Auckland region. A further objective was to protect the landscape
from suburbanization therefore forming a sort of ‘green belt’. They were also very
much aware that the nearest national park was some 400kms to the south. So their
vision was to create in effect a network of mini national parks.

From small beginnings with the purchase in 1965 of Wenderholm and Long Bay Regional Parks the network has grown to cover 40,000 hectares of land in 25 regional parks – protecting 150km of beaches and precious coastal landscapes. So important is the regional parks network in forming a ‘green belt’ that the only significant unspoiled open space on the eastern sea board of the Hauraki Gulf is now in regional parks – 5 regional parks to the south of the city and 6 regional parks to the north – in the Rodney District. In recent years the ARC has been in a race against time to secure suitable land – ideally coastal land - while it is still available and while it is still affordable.

That brings me back to the point about why this occasion and this land is so very special. Today ladies and gentlemen we not only celebrate the opening of a wonderful new regional park but also we also celebrate the extraordinary generosity of Pierre and Jackie Chatelanat who have gifted their magnificent Atiu Creek station to the people of New Zealand - - to be held in trust by the Auckland Regional Council as a regional park. Atiu Creek Regional Park at 843 ha will be the third largest regional park in the network after Waitakere and Hunua Regional Parks.

I am sure that Atiu Creek with its many attractive features will become one of the jewels in the crown of our network.

The gifting of land on this scale is a very rare event in New Zealand - one has to back many years to find other examples. They are few but they are notable. For instance the gift to the nation by the paramount chief of Ngati Tuwharetoa Te Heheu Tukino of that vast area of land to become the Tongariro National Park.

Then some years later the gift to the people of Auckland by Sir John Logan Campbell of Cornwall Park and then, more recently, though now more than 50 years ago, the gift of Browns Island, Motu Korea to the people of Auckland by Sir Ernest Davies.

I alluded earlier to the ARC’s mission to expand and enhance the Regional Parks network. The ARC of course has another pressing mission. Many of us travelled here today by train, from Auckland to Wellsford. We did this for two reasons:

1) Riding on the train is a very enjoyable experience and 2) We wanted to send a political message – that just as our regional parks network is truly regional – our aspiration is that Auckland’s passenger rail services will have a genuinely regional reach. To this end, in a few week’s time we will be commencing passenger train services to Helensville – for the first time in decades.

Before I close I would like to share with you a quotation from an illustrious New Zealander which I find inspirational at times like this. It is from the late Maori Queen, the Ariki Nui Dame Te Atai Rangi Kaahu. And it is from her speech at the official opening of Waharau Regional Park in 1979 – nearly 30 years ago:

“I go back in memory to a small girl who spent summers on this land. I hope that the children of Greater Auckland, especially will come here to enjoy what I enjoyed, to bump into nature, and to find here a real adventure playground. When a child I had a child’s impression that New Zealand was a great open space of mountains, forests, hills, riverbanks and beaches. Fortunately there were far-sighted people who realized that land is restricted, resources are perishable, and open-space is diminishing. Well indeed it is, that most New Zealanders now consider regional parks a priority.”

Finally ladies and gentlemen I referred earlier to Pierre and Jackie’s extraordinary generosity in gifting of their land to “the people of New Zealand”. Therefore how wonderful and how appropriate it is that the Governor General of New Zealand – the Queen’s representative in New Zealand has graciously travelled here to day as an expression of thanks on behalf of the people of New Zealand.

Thank you.

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa.