

**From:** [Bev Bremner](#)

**To:** [the2corbett@xtra.co.nz](mailto:the2corbett@xtra.co.nz)

**Sent:** Monday, May 19, 2008 10:46 AM

**Subject:** Whangamata Reserves Management Plan : Protected Moko Skink.

Dr Corbett

Thank you for your email, received by the Chief Executive.

The Reserve Management Plan process was managed by Sam Marshall, Area Manager Whangamata, and your concerns have been forwarded to Sam who has been asked to respond to you directly.

Should you have any further concerns in the meantime however, please feel free to contact Sam at Council's Whangamata office (865 0060 ) or by email – [sam.marshall@tcdc.govt.nz](mailto:sam.marshall@tcdc.govt.nz).

**Bev Bremner**

Executive PA to Chief Executive and Mayor

Thames-Coromandel District Council

-----Original Message-----

**From:** the2corbett [mailto:[the2corbett@xtra.co.nz](mailto:the2corbett@xtra.co.nz)]

**Sent:** Friday, 16 May 2008 10:28

**To:** Steve Ruru

**Subject:** Fw: Whangamata Reserves Management Plan : Protected Moko Skink.

Dear Mr.Ruru,

I am writing to you as Chief Executive to protest at the administrative behaviour of your staff. I say behaviour since I cannot judge whether this is due to incompetence, obstruction, lack of co-operation, or a mixture of some or all ?

This is now beyond any personal level of complaint since we are dealing with a failure to recognise or abide by national criminal law, namely the Wildlife Act - please note the content of the forwarded e-mail below, and not least its first sentence.

As you can see, I wrote this by way of detailed submission almost eight months ago Having heard no response, not even the common courtesy of an acknowledgement, I contacted your Council on the 4th March and was eventually rung back by an Alicia (Oye?) who assured me that "the Management Team would sort this out and would respond a.s.a.p."

Another eleven weeks have elapsed and not even a postcard !!

Whangamata is the second only population of the protected Moko Skink to have survived on mainland New Zealand and its killing and disturbance is legally forbidden.

There is currently a belated and poorly resourced exercise underway to rescue Moko Skinks from habitat to be lost to the Marina development, but it has now been noted that their best known habitat at Whangamata - the causeway road bank - has just been heavily sprayed ! Presumably by or under contract to your Council ?

Returning to the submission content of my September e-mail, why was I not informed of or invited to the anticipated Hearing ?

I now await a full reply at your Council's earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,  
Dr.Keith Corbett, MBE.,

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [the2corbett](mailto:the2corbett)  
**To:** [customer.services@tcdc.govt.nz](mailto:customer.services@tcdc.govt.nz)  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 27, 2007 2:46 PM  
**Subject:** Fw: Whangamata Reserves Management Plan : Protected Moko Skink.

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [the2corbett](mailto:the2corbett)  
**To:** [customer.services@tdc.govt.nz](mailto:customer.services@tdc.govt.nz)  
**Cc:** [JGaukrodger@doc.govt.nz](mailto:JGaukrodger@doc.govt.nz) ; [panderson@doc.govt.nz](mailto:panderson@doc.govt.nz) ; [dtowns@doc.govt.nz](mailto:dtowns@doc.govt.nz) ;  
[dcraddock@xtra.co.nz](mailto:dcraddock@xtra.co.nz) ; [melinda@te-ngahere.co.nz](mailto:melinda@te-ngahere.co.nz)  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 27, 2007 1:50 PM  
**Subject:** Whangamata Reserves Management Plan : Protected Moko Skink.

Dear Sirs,

I wish to bring to your notice the wildlife implications of your present consultation and for which your serious consideration is now sought.

I apologise for missing your deadline (last Friday) but have had a deal of catching up to achieve before submitting, including a days site visit with herpetological colleagues once we had appreciated the timely significance of your current exercise.

I strongly support your Objectives and Policies concerning **Ecosystems & Biodiversity**, and **Flora & Fauna**, but at the same time cannot see how this could be implemented for the Moko Skink without further targeted deliberations. Meanwhile, the effects of adverse management should be offset and minimised.

Background.

While this species (*Oligosoma moco*) is still found on those offshore islands comparatively lacking mammalian pests, its NZ mainland status has declined to near extinction. Recent urban development and inappropriate management has now caused the loss of 6 of its 8 such known localities. The 7th being recently discovered in my area, and the 8th being at Whangamata - here the Marina decision and the failure of its prior environmental assessment and mitigation to include reptiles is now exacerbating the situation

This species is now officially listed as Threatened, and like all NZ lizards is fully protected under the provisions of the Wildlife Act. Thus killing or disturbance are amongst disallowed actions and for which there is a 'mens rea' clause that effectively covers reckless cf. deliberate actions. In other words, actions and

activities which were likely to have had such effect even when not undertaken with that deliberate purpose.

Our field research strongly points to the Moko's mainland survival being dependant on a sufficient ground vegetation to provide not only cover, prey, humidity, home range 'edges', etc., but also some protection and physical warning against the foraging of alien mammal predators such as the 2 species of rats and the 3 mustelids. Such essential refuge and habitat is nowadays not always provided by native vegetation, and indeed **Kikuyu** and **Pampas** are often key.

With careful planning and particular attention to Moko populations, replacement native plantings should be established **before** their existing habitat(s) are mown down and/or sprayed. Recommended planting alternatives would include :

*Dienella; Gahnia; Arthropodium cirratum; Tenex cookianum; Muehlenbeckia complexa; Fulvida* (Toe-toe). The latter is a useful and attractive replacement for Pampas. Unfortunately, I am unable to recommend a skink friendly grass to replace Kikuyu, not least because of its fast growth and complex physical structure. The answer here is for relevant local stands to be high cut (c.15cms) and only occasionally - see Hetherington Road below.

#### Whangamata Reserves.

Although restorative/enhancement management would now appear urgent if the Whangamata Moks are to be safeguarded for the future, **Survey** of actual and potential sites is crucial to guide your management options. The NZ.Herpetological Society may be able to provide some regional input and I am sure that DoC will also have useful contacts. Now, ie. Springtime, is the optimum period.

#### HETHERINGTON ROAD\*.

Two habitat bands should be immediately restored along a) the north west, immediately and above the (illegally?) damaged salt marsh and Moana Anu Anu reserve; and b) the south west, parallel to and above the drainage ditch.

In both cases, there should be at least a 5 metre strip wherein Kikuyu should be allowed to recover and enhancement plantings be initiated.

Liaison should be set up with the adjoining industrial site wherein current earthworks and vegetation clearance are destroying the Moko and its habitat(s). The need for urgent co-operation over landscape planting is now obvious.

#### BEACH ROAD\*.

Larger areas of potential habitat remained, especially Kikuyu including that covering concrete from foundations and/or tip. However, serious degradation was occurring via cutting and spraying; eg. of peripheral Kikuyu, and particularly of most

Pampas clumps.

A compromise management regime is needed but it is noted that the aerial insert on P.23 actually omits much of the site and its habitat(s) ? If this is in fact an area to be converted to marina development (local talk is of an approved car park ?) then a **prior rescue and relocation of Moko** is required to avoid a serious breach of the Wildlife Act. ??

While we were only able to confirm the survival (just) of Moko at each of the above sites, a deterioration from survey/basking weather precluded other than a preliminary habitat assessment of two other reserve sites :

ISLAND VIEW (SE.half) and OTAHU POINT. Both still support potential habitat and thus support a Moko survey to advise on their specific management needs.

There appears to be lesser habitat potential along the OTAHU ESTUARY but it would be simple to include that area within the above survey.

We were unable to assess other possible Moko sites from your proposed management plans :

MOANA ANU ANU ESTUARY (both sides) as illustrated on your P.36., what is the meaning of their cross hatched strips - perhaps tidal/mangrove ?

ONEMANA BEACH complex.

But both sites merit Moko survey before you determine their management.

Lastly, a word on the best known Moko site - the banks of HARRY WATT DRIVE - "The Causeway".\*

Its management presumably lies within the purview of another T.D.C. roads associated department ? Whatever, its habitat management is haphazard and without consideration to Moko needs. Whether its population is self sustainable cf. dependant on the adjacent but now damaged Beach, Hetherington, and Casement Road habitats, even its rock faced refugia seem vulnerable to tidal surge and flood inundation. This site too should therefore be included in any consideration of Moko conservation at Whangamata.

I have marked 3 sites/areas above with an asterisk\* to suggest where DoC.might be in an equal or better position to become involved ?

Thanking you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,  
Keith Corbett.

My Contact details :

Dr.Keith Corbett, MBE  
48,Kensington Terrace,  
Gulf Harbour,  
WHANGAPARAOA,

Auckland, 0930.

Tel. 09 424 8083.

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YES, I would be willing to speak in support of my submission.