

CLEAN BOTTOMS

On 28 August representatives of several concerned organisations discussed the recent feature article in *Boating New Zealand* – ‘Clean Bottoms’ [August 2023].

Those organisations, including, AYBA, NZMIA, AMUA, YNZ, Multi Hull Association, were unanimous in their concern that the article presented an overly optimistic picture of the facilities needed to maintain ‘clean bottoms’.

The article quoted NZMOA who provided a number of reassuring comments, but it did not answer the key question being posed by owners of Auckland’s more than 9,000 moored boats – is there sufficient capacity in suitable locations to enable boat owners to comply with the objectives of biosecurity policy and Council rules and regulations?

It appears NZMOA did not address the findings of the report prepared by Ecometric Consulting that was commissioned by Northland, Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty regional councils and which had the specific purpose of gathering data on the availability and accessibility of antifouling facilities. That report will be known to NZMOA and was based on data provided by NZMOA members, public facilities and private member clubs to the report’s authors.

In the case of the Auckland region, the report concluded that the region only had 33% of the capacity needed to antifoul the Auckland fleet on an annual basis. The practical inference of that assessment is that the expansion of facilities, off-season application of antifouling and new technology identified in the article needs to be able to deliver three times the current level of antifouling activity – now – not sometime in the future.

The Ecometric report also exposes underlying concerns that the full impact of biosecurity rules and regulations has yet to become apparent to boat owners or the marine industry. Those concerns arise from two factors expected to drive a step change in demand.

Firstly, Auckland Council conducts annual hull inspection surveys. Recent data shows that 47% of moored boats are non-compliant with the level of fouling requirement, LOF2. Auckland Council has openly stated it has not yet issued any enforcement notices. What will happen when it does, and why is Council not enforcing regulations designed to protect and preserve the economic, environmental and social value of the region’s beaches and harbours and the Hauraki Gulf?

Secondly, the four regional councils that commissioned the Ecometric report anticipate that the current average frequency of antifouling is about once every two years and will need to be annual in the future to meet the anticipated level of fouling standards. The consequence of these two factors is an indicative doubling of hull cleaning and antifouling activity.

Of particular concern is the situation in the central Waitematā area, where more than 3,500

In mid-September 2023 Richard Steel, acting on behalf of Auckland Marina Users Association Inc and Auckland Yacht and Boating Association Inc., sent Boating New Zealand the following Letter to the Editor. While too long for our Letters section, in the interests of balance we agree that these organisations’ concerns deserve publication.

boats are moored at Westhaven, Bayswater, Orakei and Outboard Boating Club marinas and the nearby bays. Previously served by Pier 21, the floating dock, Orams, and The Landing, only Orams and the floating dock remain.

As a consequence, it seems likely that a large number of boats in the central Waitematā must now travel outside that area to access haul-out and hardstand facilities for antifouling; a situation which is in direct contradiction with the key objective of New Zealand’s marine biosecurity policy and strategy to minimise the movement of bio-fouled vessels. This key objective clearly points to the need for haul-out and hardstand facilities and antifouling services to be located in close proximity to moored boats.

Additional hardstand and increased lifting capacity referenced in the article is great to see and AMUA and other interested organisations are well aware of these changes. However, these new facilities have some limitations. For example, the superb facilities at Tamaki Marine Centre are focussed on stored boats and launches – which is understandable given that access is constrained by the Panmure Bridge with a maximum height clearance of eight metres.

In addition, Orams recent expansion was primarily targeted at serving the large luxury yacht market and the main business of the floating dock is lift, hold and wash with antifouling generally only possible overnight or at weekends.

NZMOA’s comments also seem to contradict its submission to the Orakei Local Board, which together with the NZMIA opposed the planned closure of The Landing on the basis of concerns regarding the need to retain existing and develop new facilities in the Auckland region.

It is also notable that Council officers twice recommended that the Orakei Local Board should retain short stay haul-out and hardstand facilities at the Landing in support of biosecurity requirements.

In the case of Bayswater, it appears the originally planned and consented haul-out and

hardstand facilities at Bayswater Marina were not developed because of the neighbouring facilities that existed at that time. However, Bayswater would be ideally situated to serve the boats moored in the central Waitematā and facilities can still be developed as a permitted activity. An opportunity which seems to be lost on NZMOA and Auckland Council.

It is for these reasons that owners of moored boats continue to question whether the available facilities are sufficient to achieve the throughput required, or suitably located to minimise the movement of bio-fouled boats.

Considerable care has been taken to compile the factual information and data that underpins AMUA’s concerns to raise awareness of these issues. [Richard’s letter included an attached presentation to Council summarising the facts].

AMUA believes that many boat owners are not yet aware of the biosecurity factors expected to significantly increase (more than double) demand for haul out and hardstand facilities for hull cleaning and antifouling; and, given the example of Pier 21, the lack of protection under the Auckland Unitary Plan for existing facilities and suitable locations for any new facilities.

In this regard – and at the heart of the concerns expressed at the meeting on 28 August – were not only the recent haul-out and hardstand closures, but also the increasing land pressures around the coastline and the lack of protection for the remaining haul-out and hardstand facilities under the Auckland Unitary Plan.

Examples cited included the zoning for Orams Marina in the Wynyard Precinct. Orams land area is not included in the marina zone area for Westhaven and is in fact zoned as part of the much higher value Business–City Centre Zone. The closure of Pier 21 exemplifies the desire of landowners, including Eke Panuku, to maximise value from waterfront land when zoning allows. Similar situations exist at Pine Harbour and Hobsonville, which provide some 25% of the now remaining capacity, and where the precinct plans enable higher value residential and commercial use on the land currently occupied by haul-out and hardstand facilities.

In New Zealand’s largest city and where intensified use of the land zoned for residential and commercial activities is resulting in increasing demand on all open space and recreational facilities, it seems a nonsense that Council is not seeking to protect and encourage the development of marine recreational assets for all marine recreational and supporting facilities and services.

The following tables detail the basis for capacity concerns, noting that these commercial scale facilities provide more than 80% of existing antifouling activity.

LEFT: The Central Waitematā Wider Waitematā, Tamaki and Gulf.

Location	Notes
Westhaven	
Pier 21	Privately owned - Closed - previously utilised at 80% of annual capacity
Orams	Repurposed to focus on 20m+ boats limited capacity for boats less than 20m
Floating Dock	Only available for overnight or weekend antifouling
Bayswater	Hardstand consented but never developed and now consented for residential development - subject to appeal - Council expert advised there was demand for a facility similar to Pier 21
Orakei	No facilities
The Landing	Orakei Local Board plan to close this facility and it has been decommissioned - Environment officers twice recommended retention of a short stay hardstand facility
Outboard Boating Club	No facilities

Location	Notes
Kennedy Bay	No facilities
Half Moon Bay	Redeveloped with covered work areas but reduced hardstand spaces
Tamaki Marine Centre	Expanded to 9000m ² hardstand but access restricted to 8m by Panmure Bridge
Pine Harbour	Privately owned. Precinct plan enables majority of hardstand area to be used for higher value residential/commercial activities
Hobsonville	Precinct plan enables hardstand area to be used for higher value residential/commercial activities
Gulf Harbour	Hardstand area increasingly used for trailerable boat storage. 40-50% loss of hardstand spaces since 2008