

Report No.	13-236
Information Only - No Decision Required	

## TRANS-TASMAN RESOURCES' MARINE CONSENT APPLICATION

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This item is to provide members with background information regarding Trans-Tasman Resources' (TTR) proposal to mine the seabed near Patea, and its current application to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) for a marine consent.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 13-236 and Annexes.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. There is no financial impact for Horizons Regional Council (Horizons) from these matters.

### 4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. TTR, New Zealand Petroleum and Minerals (NZPAM), and the EPA are responsible for community engagement on TTR's proposal and applications.

### 5. BACKGROUND

- 5.1. TTR has applied to the EPA for a marine consent to mine iron sands in an area located near the west coast of the Region, in the South Taranaki Bight. The proposed mining area is beyond the Coastal Marine Area (CMA), in the Exclusive Economic Zone between 22 and 36 kilometres off the coast of Patea. It covers 65.76 square kilometres, in water depths of 20 to 45 metres. A map showing the proposed area in relation to Horizons' boundary is attached as Annex A.
- 5.2. The marine consent application was notified on 21 November and is open for submissions until 19 December. A hearing will be held from 4 March 2014. The application will be decided by a panel of five independent experts. Information about this application and the consenting process is available on the EPA website at [http://www.epa.govt.nz/EEZ/trans\\_tasman/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.epa.govt.nz/EEZ/trans_tasman/Pages/default.aspx).
- 5.3. TTR has had a prospecting licence in the area since December 2010. Earlier this year it applied to NZPAM for a licence to mine the area. Horizons was invited to comment on a summary of the application by NZPAM and did so in September 2013. The response was endorsed by the Strategy and Policy Committee at the 10 September meeting.
- 5.4. The main points raised in the response to NZPAM were the potential for environmental effects to extend into the CMA within the Horizons Region, and the recommendation that iwi with rohe along the east coast of the Region be included in the consultation process. The potential for economic benefits to the Region, particularly around Whanganui, was recognised. It was also acknowledged that there would be the opportunity to raise Horizons' concerns regarding the potential environmental effects within the Region through the marine consent process. A copy of the letter to NZPAM is attached as Annex B.

## 6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1. TTR has applied for marine consent to extract up to 50 million tonnes of sediment per year (for a term of 20 years) and process that sediment aboard a floating processing, storage and offloading vessel. It is expected that about 5 million tonnes of iron ore will be exported as a result, with the remaining 45 million tonnes of 'de-ored' sediment redeposited onto the sea floor. The extraction will be carried out using a 'Crawler' in defined 'lanes' approximately 12 metres wide. De-ored sand will be redeposited through a pipe from about 4 metres above the seabed. Where possible it will be redeposited into areas already mined. Fine sediment will be discharged separately higher in the water column.
- 6.2. The main concerns raised for the Horizons Region previously have been around potential for sediment plumes to extend into the Region's CMA. TTR's application is supported by two reports on sediment plume effects, prepared by NIWA on TTR's behalf. Horizons has not independently reviewed these reports.
- 6.3. Section 5.3 of the application document states that:
- "The plume of mining-derived sediment is insignificant relative to the natural SSCs [suspended solids concentrations] near the coast."
- "Deposition rates of mining-derived sediments near the coast are only a minor change in comparison with natural rates."
- "In terms of visible cumulative effects, the mining derived sediment will not add appreciably to the natural or background levels within the inshore and nearshore marine areas."
- 6.4. Based on the low level of potential environmental effects to Horizons Region from sediment plumes identified in the application, it is recommended that Horizons does not make a submission on TTR's application.
- 6.5. Also of note, TTR included in the application an analysis of the economic benefits of the proposal commissioned from the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research. This analysis identifies that, in addition to benefits to New Zealand as a whole, most benefits will accrue to the Taranaki Region. It does not identify that there will be any economic benefit to the Horizons Region specifically.

## 7. SIGNIFICANCE

- 7.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance.

Pen Tucker  
**POLICY ANALYST**

## ANNEXES

- A Area of TTR's marine consent application  
B Feedback to NZPAM regarding TTR's application to mine