

Media Release
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Hauraki Gulf Forum announces 2015 Holdaway Awards *Recipients call for change.*

A Māori leader, a marine reserve scientist and family owners of an island are winners of this year's Holdaway Awards to recognise leadership in and around the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

Richelle Kahui-McConnell (Ngāti Maniapoto) has worked closely with Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, leading practical restoration work at Ōkāhu Bay, encouraging youth involvement in conservation, and incorporating Mātauranga Maori perspectives into policy development processes.

Dr Nick Shears from the University of Auckland has carried out internationally renowned research on marine reserves that has been crucial in understanding the ecological effects of fishing on inshore reefs and how these can be reversed with marine protection.

Rod and Sue Neureuter accepted an award on behalf of their family, who have owned the Noises since 1933, supporting the first successful island rat eradication in New Zealand 50 years ago as well as many restoration initiatives on the islands.

The awards recognise emerging leadership and potential and were announced at this week's Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Seminar.

The annual seminar has served to define responses to issues facing the Gulf for the past five years.

Richelle Kahui-McConnell echoed several speakers who explained the significance of Mātauranga (indigenous knowledge) in management, particularly recognition and measurement of mauri (life force) as an indicator of wellbeing and progress.

Dr Nick Shears said research over 40 years at Leigh had shown the remarkable capacity of reefs to regenerate when released from fishing pressure, but over the past ten years the number of large resident crayfish and snapper has been reduced, due to intensified catches on its edges and declines in the wider fishery. He called for an extension of the seaward boundaries of the Leigh and Tawharanui marine reserves beyond the current 800 metres, to retain large residents – critical to reef health - and enhance the effectiveness of the reserves as a tool to regenerate surrounding areas.

Sue Neureuter said that while their family had observed improvements in the flora and fauna of the islands she felt saddened and helpless at the decline in the surrounding marine environment. It was not unusual to observe 85 recreational fishing vessels around the tiny islands, involved in line, spear and dredge fishing.

The seminar heard how new leadership, particularly in the farming and fishing sectors, was needed to stabilise and enhance environmental health and the social and economic benefits that would derive from it.

Sanford Chief Executive Volker Kuntzsch told the seminar his company was prepared to stop fishing in the Gulf "if everyone who 'throws a line in' to the country's most popular fishery records and reports what they are catching."

Hauraki Gulf Forum Chair John Tregidga welcomed this emerging leadership and the willingness of sectors to look for accommodations and innovation to enhance the Hauraki Gulf/ Tīkapa Moana.

The Holdaway Award recognises the legacy of Jim Holdaway, who championed the creation of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, within a farming, civic and military career characterised by courage, service and leadership.

The awards were presented by his wife Ann Holdaway, who celebrated her 90th birthday this year.

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For more information and interviews with recipients contact:

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Photo supplied

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Rod and Sue Neureuter, Ann Holdaway, Richelle Kahui-McConnell, Dr Nick Shears