



Tauranga/Bay of Plenty Branch Special Edition # 2: Rena

Our Response to the Rena Catastrophe *by Gillian Oakbrook, newsletter coordinator*



***Volunteer against the misty backdrop of Mount Maunganui.
Photo Courtesy Ron Lopert***

A week and a half after the Rena struck Astrolabe Reef, realisation of the huge cleanup task we have ahead of us has well and truly dawned. With this realisation can come strong feelings of anger, frustration, helplessness and grief, along with a need to get stuck into the task *right now*. Many of us are particularly angry at the seeming inability of the powers-that-be to move fast enough to mitigate the disaster and to make use of the huge army of volunteers that has made itself available to help with the clean-up and wildlife rescue efforts.

As Green Party members, by our very natures we have a strong heart connection to the environment that sustains us and which is our home. It gives us deep grief to see ecosystems that were already under considerable strain from human activities devastated by this man-made disaster. Personally I have frequently found myself in tears at the suffering of wildlife, and anger and frustration are resulting in tetchiness being very close to the surface! I have also felt deeply moved by the fierce

protectiveness so many people are expressing towards this beautiful, ecologically vibrant place that is our home. It has been comforting to realise that those around me are feeling much the same way.

For me, all of this has highlighted how important it is to allow ourselves to feel the anger, grief, and frustration, and realise that we are not alone. The support and company of like-minded people is vital; we need each other, our mutual understanding, our humour, warmth and camaraderie, to help us to be strong. And at this time, more than ever, our local ecosystems *need* us Greens to channel our anger into action, to be strong, to speak up and do what we can, not for reasons of political expediency but for what we know is right.



***Guest at the wildlife rescue centre.
Photo Courtesy Ron Lopert***

For this reason I strongly urge you to come along to the Tauranga/BoP branch meeting on Tuesday night, 7.00pm, at the Tauranga Environment Centre, and **please do bring like-minded friends and family members** who you think might benefit from the meeting.

At this meeting, amongst other things, we will be touching on ways of looking after ourselves and each other as we get through this crisis, and practical ways in which we can help, including the planned formation of a Green Team to work on the clean-up.

We are delighted to announce that we will have a very special guest, Greens coleader Metiria Turei, with us at the meeting.

Our beautiful home has taken a devastating blow, but though deeply wounded, underneath the layers of oil and debris it is still beautiful and resilient, and it will heal. We can help that healing process, and we don't have to do it alone.

**Green Party Branch Meeting:
Rena Response
7.00pm October 18th
Tauranga Environment Centre
Seventeenth Avenue
(turn right through first gate,
and then right again)
ALL WELCOME!!
Special guest Metiria Turei**

I'm looking forward to seeing you all on Tuesday evening.



*Papamoa Street Artwork by Graeme Hoete and Owen Dippie sums up the feeling!
Photo courtesy Ron Lopert*

Action List: What You Can Do to Help:



- If you haven't already done so, sign up to volunteer. To do this you must be over 16, reasonably fit, and able to work a 4-hour shift. You can volunteer online at www.boprc.govt.nz/oilspillvolunteers, by calling 0800 645 774 or by visiting Mt Maunganui, Omanu or Papamoa Surf Clubs. You must provide your own gumboots and food and water; all other equipment will be provided. We are hoping to form a Green Team to work on the cleanup together; if you would like to be part of this team, volunteer in the usual way and then let us know that you have done so - email Ron Lopert at rlupert@xtra.co.nz.

- Support our local economy through this crisis by buying local goods from local businesses.

*Catherine Delahunty
gets stuck into the
cleanup. Photo courtesy
Jason Egnw*

- Donate to the newly-formed Bay of Plenty Care for our Coast Fund, set up by the Western Bay, Tauranga City, and Bay of Plenty Regional Councils. You can make a donation over the counter at any National Bank or ANZ branch or via internet banking to:

National Bank Account: 06-0489-0094734-50

ANZ Account: 01-1839-0256313-00

Details of how donations can be made and how the Fund will operate will soon be on the Councils' websites. The Fund will benefit the islands, including Motiti, as well as the mainland.

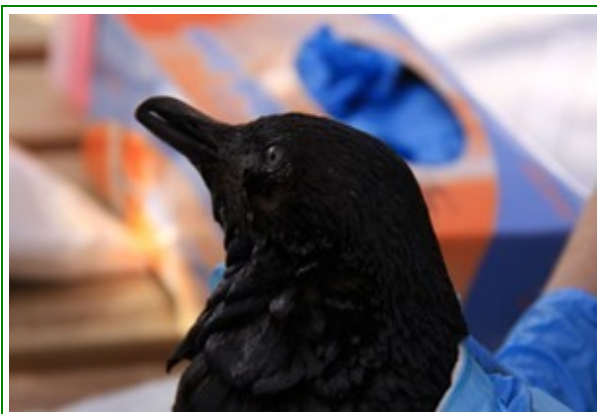
- Forest and bird would like help with wildlife observations. If you wish to help, download an observation form to record information from <http://forum.forestandbird.org.nz/topic/tauranga-oil-spill>

- Attend public meetings, ask questions, demand real answers! Ask what, given the slow response to this disaster, the "experts" intend to do should offshore oil drilling lead to an even more catastrophic oil spill.

- Do not handle oil found on beaches; it is highly toxic. Do not handle oiled animals; aside from the toxicity of the oil, the animal will be highly distressed and may bite; handling the animal will stress it further. Phone the Te Maunga Wildlife Rescue Centre on 0800 333 771 and stay with the animal until help arrives. If the animal moves, stay with it if you can.



*Cleanup, Papamoa Beach.
Photo courtesy Ron Lopert*



*We're barracking for the Oil Blacks! Photo
TV3 News*

A final note:

Look after yourself and each other. The next weeks and months are going to be hard, but it is important we still take time out to rest and give ourselves permission to experience the joys of friendship and connection with each other and the beauty of the environment.

warm regards, Gillian -

gillian.oakbrook@xtra.co.nz



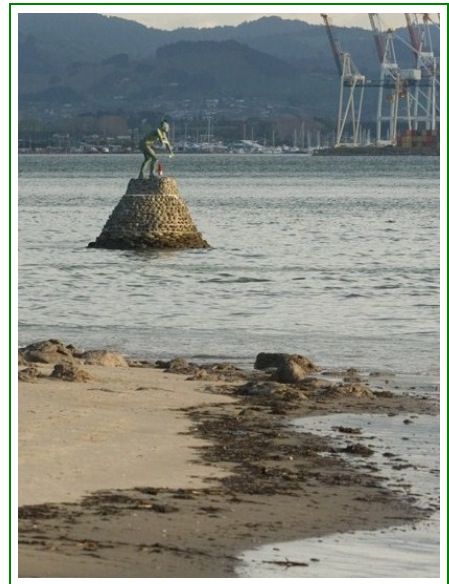
Ian G. McLean Candidate for Tauranga **An update on the MV Rena:**

An extraordinarily busy ten days, attending media briefings and public meetings, and hosting Green MPs. The ship has shifted and is now lying along the reef. That presumably makes it much more difficult to take off containers. Realistically, they may now have to wait for them to fall off so that they can use the heavy lift boat to get them out of the sea, if they don't sink. The salvors are getting on and off by helicopter. They are trying to access the oil through the side of the hull. The oil itself has cooled and the best option for getting it out now is using an auger - presumably a much more time consuming method than pumping of hot oil as a fluid. The media still refers to "pumping". No time frames for getting the oil out are being given. But there is a good window of weather now and they may be able to start taking out oil on Sunday. Perhaps the oil will be still warm enough to pump, but that seems doubtful. I have not heard an update on whether they will be able to access the fuel tanks on both sides of the hull, but presumably they have ideas on that.

The police are now standing by at all public meetings. After the meeting Thursday night when a possibly drunk member of the public interrupted Christine and tried to shut her down, the police were called as a precautionary measure. There was no direct or implied violence and if there had been, I have no doubt that the crowd would have stopped it immediately. Friday 14 Oct was very busy with several public meetings and John Key running what was really a campaign meeting. He was yelled at for trying to talk about things other than the Rena. The evening meeting was very sedate.

I was at a candidates' meeting (Grey Power) through the afternoon. The National Party candidates are not attending candidate meetings (likely none at all). They are citing being "too busy" as the reason, but in reality most of the meetings were set up before the Rena event began, and they had already either refused to come or had remained neutral on coming. There were a lot of negative comments about them at the Grey Power meeting, but the main support there was for NZ First.

The National candidates are using the public meetings as "non-political" campaign meetings. They are routinely sitting on the stage and being asked to comment. Sometimes they chair the meeting. They are receiving enormous amounts of exposure through aligning themselves with the community mayors and the voluntary response programme. And of course they are always alongside John Key, who is showing up every few days now. There has never been a representative of another party on stage at a public meeting, with the possible exception of iwi hui.



Oil, Mauo. Photo courtesy Jason Egnew

Maritime NZ demonstrated itself as being paternalistic, out of touch, with inadequate preparation for the enormity of the task, and generally unresponsive to community feelings and needs. The Regional Council was way behind the ball and clearly did not

offer advice or prepare an effective communications plan. The absence of community consultation during the first week of this event is an issue for which they apologise at every meeting to date. The first consultative meetings were on Sunday (iwi - Motiti Is) and Monday (organised by a Papamoa community group - not the authorities). The first authority-organised meeting was Tuesday night (7 days after the grounding), and we firmly believe that it was stimulated by our proposal to organise such a meeting for the Wednesday night.

The mayors are now "organising" and fronting the voluntary effort. It took them a while to remember the lesson of the Christchurch mayor.

The 11 (used to be 8, then magically became 11 on Monday) containers with toxic substances are as follows: ferro silicon (4), hydrogen peroxide (4), Potassium nitrate (1) alkyl sulfonic acid (1) , trisomething cyanuric acid (1). I have only heard this list once (on Thursday evening 13 Oct), after a member of the public had to demand the list 3 times. A clear response to this question had constantly been avoided, and the list has not been given at any of the media updates that I have attended, despite appropriate questions from the media. I have written to a chemist friend asking about the last two, although my reading of wikipedia does not suggest that any of them are to be feared when heavily diluted. At least one has gone into the sea. It gave off "steam" and a blue dye - was possibly the sulfonic acid.

The team representing the various key activities at the public meetings are clearly tiring. Professor Chris Battershill has called in reinforcements (Prof David Schiel from Canterbury). The wildlife people send someone different almost every time. There are no public meetings through the weekend, giving them a break.

I look forward to seeing you all at our branch meeting this Tuesday

- Ian McLean



Sign of the times - Pilot Bay. Photo courtesy Jason Egnew



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