



COMMENT ON THE BREAM BAY SAND EXTRACTION PROJECT
McCallum Bros Ltd Application for Fast-Track Consent to Extract Sand from Te Akau Bream Bay

Submitted by: Tāngaro Tuia te Ora — Endangered Species Foundation

Date: May 2026

Submitted to: substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz

1. Contact Details	
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.	
Organisation name (if relevant)	Endangered Species Foundation – Tāngaro Tuia te Ora Registered Charity: CC49520

1. Summary of Opposition

Tāngaro Tuia te Ora opposes in full the application by McCallum Bros Ltd (MBL) for fast-track consent to extract 8.45 million cubic metres of sand from the seabed at Te Akau Bream Bay over 35 years. We call on the panel to reject this application.

This submission opposes the application on five grounds:

- There is no sand crisis and no economic justification for seabed extraction.
- The proposal poses severe and irreversible risks to tara iti (NZ fairy tern), one of the world's rarest seabirds, and the wider marine ecosystem.
- The fast-track process is fundamentally unsuited to decisions of this scale and permanence.
- MBL has a documented record of non-compliance and environmental harm at existing operations.
- Widespread public and community opposition — including a 14,000-signature petition delivered to Parliament — reflects the depth of concern about this proposal.

2. Background and Standing

Tāngaro Tuia te Ora, the Endangered Species Foundation, is a registered charitable organisation supporting high-priority biodiversity projects that protect the most vulnerable indigenous species and habitats of Aotearoa from extinction. Our work is Treaty-centred and mana whenua and community-led.

ESF has been actively involved in advocacy opposing the MBL seabed mining proposals at Mangawhai-Pakiri and Te Akau Bream Bay for several years. Our General Manager, Natalie Jessup, presented evidence to the Select Committee during deliberations on the Fast-Track Approvals Amendment Bill in November 2025, using the MBL application as a case study of the legislation's risks.

In March 2025, ESF Co-Chair Tāwera Nikau alongside trustees and staff, delivered a 14,000-signature petition to Parliament opposing this project, gathered in just four months from across the country. This level of public mobilisation reflects the breadth and depth of community concern about the irreversible damage this proposal, and any seabed mining, would cause.

3. No Sand Crisis — No Economic Justification

MBL's application rests on a central claim of sand supply shortage. That claim does not withstand scrutiny.

4.1 Supply far exceeds demand

A comprehensive report commissioned by New Zealand's largest engineering consultancy, Beca, found that alternative sand supply capacity exceeds Auckland demand by 350 percent. Auckland's annual concrete sand demand is 310,000 to 610,000 cubic metres. Total supply capacity already exceeds 1.5m³ per year.

4.2 MBL's economic case is unreliable

Leading economist Hayden Green conducted a scathing independent review of MBL's economic analysis and found it to be manifestly inadequate and demonstrably flawed. Green identified transport calculations as lacking in logic and emissions savings claims as entirely illusory. The review concluded the economic reports produced by MBL were unreliable and misleading.

The financial picture is stark. MBL's Te Akau operation would generate approximately \$270 million in revenue for a single, privately held company — owned by Callum and Jan McCallum. The local community benefit is **zero dollars**. The environmental cost is permanent. Sand is non-renewable on any human timescale.

4. Risks to Tara Iti and Marine Biodiversity

5.1 Tara iti — NZ fairy tern

Tara iti - NZ fairy tern, is one of the world's rarest seabirds and are known to nest at Waipū Cove, within the wider Te Akau Bream Bay coastal environment. With a total population of fewer than 50 individuals, this species has no capacity to absorb further habitat loss or population

pressure at any point along its range.

The precautionary principle must apply here. McCallum Bros cannot demonstrate that this operation poses no risk to tara iti, and the burden of proof sits with them to do so.

Tara iti are known to forage across extensive stretches of coastline. Individuals have been tracked flying from Northland to Port Waikato and back. The extraction zone falls within their wider foraging range. Seabed extraction at this scale degrades the marine ecosystem on which their prey depends, across an area far broader than the extraction footprint itself.

Where scientific uncertainty exists and the consequences are irreversible, the precautionary principle requires that consent be refused. A species of fewer than 50 individuals, on a coastline already bearing the legacy of decades of sandmining, represents exactly that situation.

The situation at Mangawhai and Pakiri, where MBL has operated for more than 80 years, illustrates what is at stake. Decades of sand extraction have contributed to the loss of over 420,000 tonnes of non-replenishing sand from the Mangawhai sandspit. Dr Phil McDermott, a former Massey University professor of resource and environmental planning, has warned that a second breach of the sandspit would have major economic and environmental consequences across multiple fronts. The sandbar is now expected to collapse in the next significant storm¹.

The cessation of MBL's Mangawhai-Pakiri operations in 2025, following the company's withdrawal of its High Court appeal, was a significant win for tara iti and for the communities that fought for it for years. The sand mining of their habitat has ended at Pakiri and Mangawhai. Approving a new fast-track application to mine a different stretch of their habitat would undo that progress.

ESF supports the efforts of tāngata whenua and local communities to oppose this application. We urge the panel to give full weight to the threat this proposal poses to tara iti survival alongside the wellbeing and sustainable existence of coastal communities.

5.2 Marine ecosystem — scallop beds, fisheries, and coastal communities

The proposed extraction zone at Te Akau overlaps with a regenerating scallop bed. This bed which is currently not being harvested, has an estimated \$726,748 in annual value and growing. It would be destroyed by mining.

Additional impacts include:

- Tāmure (snapper) fisheries supporting 14 local commercial boats with six-figure incomes
- Recreational fishing opportunities and eco-tourism income along the coast
- Sediment plumes degrading water quality across a wide area
- Coastal erosion accelerated by removal of seabed sediment that underpins beach stability

¹ <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/northern-advocate/news/mangawhai-sandspit-at-risk-community-warns-of-economic-disaster/JOPTWS3BWJHY3EQYT4FAB5XCYL/>

5. The Fast-Track Process Is Unsuitable to This Decision

The fast-track approvals process was designed to accelerate economically necessary development with genuine public benefit. This application does not meet that threshold. ESF submitted to the Select Committee during deliberations on the Fast-Track Approvals Amendment Bill that the process, as designed, is structurally incapable of adequately evaluating applications of this scale and permanence. Specific failings of the process as it applies here:

- **Short timeframes guarantee inadequate assessment.** The ecological, economic, and social consequences of 35 years of seabed extraction cannot be responsibly evaluated in 90 days.
- **No public participation.** The communities of Bream Bay, Whangarei, and Te Tai Tokerau who will bear the consequences of this decision have no formal voice in the process.
- **Ministerial influence compromises independence.** The referral process allows political considerations to influence which applications are elevated.
- **Expert evidence is constrained.** Restricted participation means panels may not receive the full range of scientific, economic, and community expertise needed to evaluate the application.
- **Damage will be irreversible.** Sand is non-renewable in this area and can never be replaced.

6. MBL's Record of Non-Compliance and Environmental Harm

The panel should give careful weight to MBL's track record before authorising any extraction at a new site.

At MBL's existing Mangawhai-Pakiri operations, local resident Damon Clapshaw discovered the company had gouged three-metre-deep trenches in the seafloor — a significant breach not identified through Auckland Council's monitoring. This is not a minor administrative failure. It reflects a pattern of inadequate compliance monitoring and insufficient enforcement that enabled ongoing harm to go undetected for years.

7. Widespread Public Opposition

In March 2025, ESF Co-Chair Tāwera Nikau, alongside Co-Chair Emma Giesen, Advisor Stu Muir, and GM Natalie Jessup, delivered a 14,000-signature petition to Parliament opposing this project. The signatures were gathered in just four months from across Aotearoa. Hūhana Lyndon, Green Party MP and a descendant of Ngā Hapū o Whangārei, received the petition and has been actively mobilising opposition across Te Tai Tokerau.



The month prior, more than a thousand people gathered at Ruakākā beach to spell out SAY NO in the sand. A comprehensive survey of local election candidates at the 2025 local body elections revealed overwhelming opposition to the proposal.

This level of public mobilisation reflects the strong opposition from fishing communities, iwi and hapū, recreational users, environmental advocates, and coastal residents about the destruction of a place that is not MBL's to take. The fast-track process removes the formal mechanisms through which these voices would ordinarily be heard. The panel should account for that democratic deficit in its deliberations.

8. Recommendation

Tāngaro Tuia te Ora requests that the panel:

- Reject the MBL application for fast-track consent to extract sand at Te Akau Bream Bay in full
- Find that the application does not meet the criteria of economic necessity or public benefit required to justify fast-track referral
- Recognise the severe and irreversible threat the proposal poses to tara iti, to tāmure fisheries, to the Bream Bay scallop beds, and to the communities of Te Tai Tokerau
- Prioritise sustainable on-land sand supply alternatives that already exceed Auckland demand and generate genuine economic benefit for communities
- Note that a company with MBL's documented compliance history is not an appropriate applicant for fast-track consent at a new ecologically sensitive site

This is not wanted. This is not needed.

The evidence is clear. Sustainable alternatives exist and are commercially proven. The ecological cost of proceeding is permanent. The communities most affected have said no loudly and clearly. There is no public benefit that could justify the destruction of Te Akau Bream Bay's seabed, its fisheries, and the habitat of one of the world's rarest birds.

We urge the panel to reject this application.

Natalie Jessup

General Manager

Tāngaro Tuia te Ora | Endangered Species Foundation

www.endangeredspecies.org.nz