

18 August 2023

Our ref: F32468/F32471  
By email

Dear [REDACTED]

### Official Information Act request – Niagara

I refer to your requests, dated 1 May and 4 May 2023, in which you requested information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA). You requested:

#### 1 May 2023 request:

*"I request the following documents and information regarding the Niagara shipwreck, sunk in 1940 off Northland's coast.*

- 1. All reports prepared or received by Maritime New Zealand regarding the Niagara in the last 10 years.*
- 2. All correspondence with government ministers regarding the Niagara since January 1 2018.*
- 3. All other correspondence regarding the Niagara prepared or received by Maritime NZ since January 1 2018."*

#### 4 May 2023 request:

*"How much were the budget bids which were made in 2018/19, and in 2020/21?"*

On 23 June 2023, Maritime New Zealand (Maritime NZ) provided you with the second tranche of information, on 11 July, we provided the third tranche, and on 31 July we provided the fourth tranche of information comprising the 2020/2021 emails. Attached with this letter is the final tranche of information comprising correspondence from 2022 and 2023.

One of the emails, dated 11 April 2022 from the Department of Conservation to Maritime NZ refers to a document titled: Underwater Cultural Heritage in Aotearoa New Zealand: Challenges and Opportunities. I have not included the document due to its size, however if you are interested, the document is publicly available at this link: [https://www.academia.edu/45639538/Underwater Cultural Heritage in Aotearoa New Zealand and Challenges and Opportunities](https://www.academia.edu/45639538/Underwater_Cultural_Heritage_in_Aotearoa_New_Zealand_Challenges_and_Opportunities) Brief information regarding the *RMS Niagara* is on page 97 of this document.

Please note that some information is withheld under:

- Section 6(a) of the OIA because release of the information would be likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand;
- Section 9(2)(a) of the OIA to protect the privacy of natural persons;
- Section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the OIA because release of the information would be likely to prejudice the commercial position of the persons who supplied the information;

- Section 9(2)(h) of the OIA to protect legal professional privilege; and
- Section 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA, to maintain the conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions.

Information that is not in scope of the request has not been provided. In relation to the grounds applied under section 9 of the OIA, we do not consider that withholding this information is outweighed by other considerations, which render it desirable, in the public interest, to make the information available (section 9(1) of the Act refers).

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response (with your personal details removed) may be published on Maritime New Zealand's website.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to email [media@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:media@maritimenz.govt.nz) .

Yours sincerely



**Anna Dwen**  
Senior Advisor, Ministerial Services

**From:** [Nigel Clifford](#)  
**To:** [Renny VanderVelde](#); [Wayne Rhodes](#)  
**Cc:** [Justin Allan](#); [David Billington](#)  
**Subject:** FW: EXTERNAL: RE: IN CONFIDENCE: Briefing Note re Niagara  
**Date:** Friday, 14 January 2022 4:00:00 pm  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)

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Just FYI.

Nigel

Nigel Clifford | Kaiwhakahaere Tuarua | Deputy Director  
Safety and Response Systems  
Maritime New Zealand | Wellington

No te rere moana Aotearoa

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**From:** 9(2)(a)

**Sent:** Friday, 14 January 2022 10:11 am

**To:** Nigel Clifford <[Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** RE: EXTERNAL: RE: IN CONFIDENCE: Briefing Note re Niagara

Hi Nigel,

Good to hear from you, I hope 2022 is treating you well so far.

Unfortunately, the Niagara project has been mothballed. After approaching iwi we were asked specifically not to reach out to any other organisations until they agreed who would be driving it from their end. This turned into a very drawn out process and (still not really resolved) and in the meantime the philanthropist has decided to relocate his ships to another country.

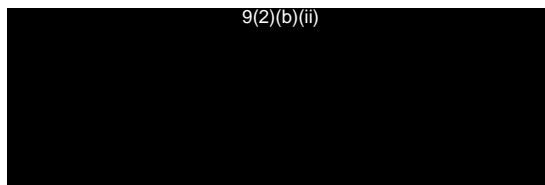
While there is slight potential of picking this back up in the future if he decides to come back to NZ, we have agreed to put everything on hold.

We are still interested in the wreck and will continue to keep an eye out for opportunities but it will be taking a back seat to our other projects. However, if possible it would be great to get a copy of the report that was requested by iwi from MNZ, especially if it has less redacted areas than the earlier version. Is that something you could help us with?

At this stage a frustrating outcome but happy to keep in touch if and when opportunities arise.

All the best,

9(2)(a)



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**From:** Nigel Clifford <[Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, 12 January 2022 12:56 PM

**To:** [REDACTED] 9(2)(a)

**Subject:** RE: EXTERNAL: RE: IN CONFIDENCE: Briefing Note re Niagara

[REDACTED] 9(2)(a)

- Happy New year. Hope you had a good holiday.

- I was just catching up with Department of Conservation today and it reminded me that I hadn't been in touch with you for ages. It would be good to catch up on matters **Niagara** and see where things have got to/what is planned for when.,

- Are you around for a catch up in the next couple of weeks? Regards,

Nigel

Nigel Clifford | Kaiwhakahaere Tuarua | Deputy Director

Safety and Response Systems

**Maritime New Zealand** | Wellington

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**From:** [REDACTED] 9(2)(a)

**Sent:** Monday, 5 July 2021 1:03 pm

**To:** Nigel Clifford <[Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** EXTERNAL: RE: IN CONFIDENCE: Briefing Note re Niagara

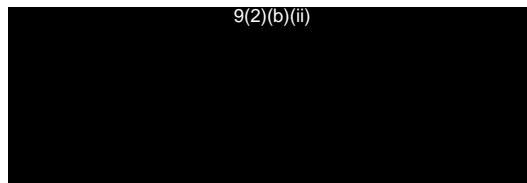
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Hello Nigel,

Good speaking before. Thank you for sharing that document, it reads well and I believe it accurately covers the current situation.

Thanks again, and I will be in touch as soon as possible.

[REDACTED] 9(2)(a)



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**From:** Nigel Clifford <[Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** 05 July 2021 10:50

**To:** [REDACTED] 9(2)(a)

**Subject:** IN CONFIDENCE: Briefing Note re Niagara

[REDACTED] 9(2)(a)

- FYI here is the wording from the briefing note re the Niagara. This is the information/comment that was provided to the office of the Minister of Transport and – I understand but can't confirm – to the offices for the Minister of Conservation and the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries. I have redacted one short paragraph. Please do not distribute the document wider. If you have any questions at any time please call.

- Look forward to hearing from you. Regards,

Nigel

Nigel Clifford | Kaiwhakahaere Tuarua | Deputy Director

Safety and Response Systems

**Maritime New Zealand** | Wellington

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**From:** [Renny VanderVelde](#)  
**To:** [Nigel Clifford](#); [Mike McMurtry](#)  
**Subject:** FW: EXTERNAL: Niagara Wreck  
**Date:** Monday, 21 March 2022 11:06:56 am

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Fyi - weather somewhat inclement though this week

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Renny VanderVelde  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 March 2022 11:06 am  
**To:** [REDACTED] 9(2)(a) Kenny Crawford <Kenny.Crawford@maritimenz.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Paul Vorwerk <Paul.Vorwerk@maritimenz.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** RE: EXTERNAL: Niagara Wreck

Hi Kenny, please see below, [REDACTED] 9(2)(a) contacted me just now indicating an opportunity to dive on the Niagara and asked what clearness were required - I thought that if there was an intent to anchor some approvals where required. Could you please get one of your team to provide the appropriate advice to [REDACTED] 9(2)(a)

Many thanks

Renny

-----Original Message-----

**From:** [REDACTED] 9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 March 2022 10:39 am  
**To:** Renny VanderVelde <Renny.VanderVelde@maritimenz.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** EXTERNAL: Niagara Wreck

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Morning Rene,

As discussed if possible we would like carry out some NZ Navy ROV training off an anchored Dive Tutukaka vessel on the RMS Niagara this coming Thursday.

Any assistance in gaining clearance would be appreciated.

Regards,

[REDACTED] 9(2)(a)

Sent from [REDACTED] 9(2)(a) iPhone.

## Anna Dwen

---

**From:** Nigel Clifford  
**Sent:** Friday, 2 September 2022 10:35 am  
**To:** Renny VanderVelde  
**Subject:** Some chronology text re the Niagra

- Concerns over the potential of a marine oil spill from the wreck of the Niagra have been raised on numerous occasions over the last 20 years or more. At different points in time these concerns have led to pressure for remediation action to reduce the potential environmental risks. Successive Governments have not supported these requests.
- Following a resurgence of interest in 2017/18 MNZ looked initially at the UK approach to managing the risk of oil leaking into the marine environment from wrecks. That process laid out a three stage process that might be followed – stage 1 - an initial desk-top assessment using known information about the wreck; stage 2 - a detailed investigation of the wreck by an underwater survey coupled with a consideration of environmental factors relevant to the wreck to give a specific risk assessment and stage 3 – possibly an operation to recover oil from the wreck if the risk assessment suggested this was appropriate.
- The desk top assessment is very high level and if there is little information available it cannot provide a very high level of confidence in the risk. In subsequent work Maritime NZ highlighted that given the available, verifiable information which was very limited (in particular no clear understanding of what oil might or might not remain in the wreck) the recommended option was to undertake a comprehensive underwater survey and develop a detail risk assessment using that information and including consideration of the environmental factor.
- Maritime NZ was requested by Ministers Genter and Sage to prepare a budget bid for the recommended option for Government to consider. Following extensive technical and operational work – including from overseas and NZ based experts in relevant fields - this was done for the budget round in 2018/19; it was not successful given the funding pressures at that time. The budget bid was revised and re-submitted in the budget round for 2020/21 but was unsuccessful given the funding pressures at that time. Government is on record as stating that due to funding pressures it is not possible to undertake the survey/risk assessment.
- There have been extensive OIAs around this matter in general and releases of much of the information and papers provided to Government including redacted versions of the two comprehensive business cases that underpinned the budget bids. MNZ does not have funding that can be used to undertake this work. Media and concerned parties continue to show interest in the matter; the most recent activity revolved around a potential private survey funded by a US billionaire but this eventually came to nothing. <sup>9(2)(g)(i)</sup>

Nigel Clifford | Deputy Chief Executive  
Response, Security and Safety Services  
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**From:** Kirstie  
**To:** [Nigel Clifford](#)  
**Subject:** EXTERNAL: Sea Change: Niagara update  
**Date:** Friday, 8 April 2022 1:16:07 pm  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Nigel,

**Purpose:** To update you on a recent Sea Change Directors decision re the Niagara.

**Context:** As you may recall, the Government response to the Sea Change Plan included a mention of the Niagara in the Protected Species chapter, and the need to assess oil spill and environmental risk (see table).

Task	Detail
Assess risk of oil spill and environmental damage to the Gulf	Consider whether any further actions are needed to reduce the threat posed by the RMS Niagara shipwreck to wildlife

Delivery of this task has been flagged as a high risk issue for some time and at a recent Sea Change Governance meeting (agency meeting), Directors made a call to take the task off the delivery scope and instead be raised as a programme-wide risk (to ensure it is still captured and elevated to Ministers) – see meeting commentary in blue below.

This email serves to let you know and to seek any update on the task from an MNZ perspective.

**Action:** Let me know if you have issues with the decision and any updates that might be helpful for the Sea Change team.

Thanks heaps Nigel.

**Protected Species – RMS Niagara:**

- Kirstie advised the RMS Niagara risk assessment is unable to progress as intended in the Strategy. The available option for delivering this (funding and delivery through a private philanthropic party) has fallen through, and other options have not been found. This has been raised with Maritime NZ, and while the risk is understood and accepted, they also do not have any available options for completing this work for this project.
- 9(2)(g)(i)  
Required resourcing including submarines is also not available to DOC/FNZ/MPI for this work.
- Directors agreed that the RMS Niagara risk is outside the ability for the project to deliver and should be removed from the scope of the project. This does, however, remain a very high risk to the project and the Hauraki Gulf due to the risk of oil spill and damage to the environment. It will be removed from scope, and instead raised as a risk. This risk must sit with the correct government agency responsible for it.

Nga mihi nui,

**Kirstie Knowles** ([she/her](#))

Manager Marine Ecosystems – *Kaimatanga Matai Ahu Moana*

Aquatic Unit, Biodiversity Group – *Kahui Kanorau Koiora*

Department of Conservation – *Te Papa Atawhai*

Focal point for: Local Gov Coastal-SIG, Sustainable Seas Challenge, NZ Marine Sciences Society, Oil Pollution Advisory Committee, IUCN-WCPA,

+64 9(2)(a)

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
✓		✓	✓	

✓ = In the office; = Working remotely; X = Not at work

Kaupapa email signature banner



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**From:** [Renny VanderVelde](#)  
**To:** [Nigel Clifford](#); [Wayne Rhodes](#); [David Billington](#); [MPRS All Staff](#)  
**Subject:** FW: EXTERNAL: Niagara Unclassified  
**Date:** Friday, 8 April 2022 4:50:13 pm  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)  
[image002.jpg](#)

Attachment provided

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FYI – I have thanked [6(a)] and asked for ongoing updates/imagery should Navy continue to undertake this diving op.

Mike M – please retain email/imagery.

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**From:** [6(a)]  
**Sent:** Friday, 8 April 2022 12:58 pm  
**To:** Jim Lyle [9(2)(a)]; Renny VanderVelde <[Renny.VanderVelde@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Renny.VanderVelde@maritimenz.govt.nz)>  
**Cc:** Jon Jon Peters [9(2)(a)]  
**Subject:** EXTERNAL: Niagara Unclassified  
Renny, Jim,

Please find attached a storyboard of HMNZS MANAWANUI's(MAN) ROV inspection on the wreck RMS Niagara this Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup>.

Renny, I'm in the [6(a)] aboard MAN so work closely with the Captain & Navigator. We have some more imagery available but will take time to prepare and also this won't be the last time we utilize the wreck for training over the next couple of months. We didn't manage to visualize where the oil seepage is coming from but can continue to look for it as one of our training objectives.

If you have any other objectives around the wreck please let me know. We missed out on getting some survey in on the DiveCat wreck in the Hauraki Gulf by only a couple of weeks due to 9 months of alongside maintenance. Any other underwater opportunities you know of; we would be interested to hear. Jim Has let me know of a smaller fishing vessel wreck up near Whale Rock as an example.

Jim would you know the Harbour Master in Napier/East Cape? We're headed there in the next few weeks.

The brief is Unclassified but if it could stay within your respective organizations that would be appreciated.

Warm regards,

[6(a)]

[6(a)]

, RNZN

[6(a)]

HMNZS Manawanui – A09 - ZMEF  
Royal New Zealand Navy



*Strength of the Sea*

*Te m [ ] rohirohi o te moana*

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**From:** Renny VanderVelde <[Renny.VanderVelde@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Renny.VanderVelde@maritimenz.govt.nz)>  
**Date:** 31 March 2022 at 12:16:25 NZDT  
**To:** [9(2)(a)]  
**Subject:** RE: EXTERNAL: Niagara

Hi 9(2)(a), sorry to hear, and many thanks for the email.

Cheers

Renny

---

**From:** 9(2)(a)

**Sent:** Thursday, 31 March 2022 11:31 am

**To:** Renny VanderVelde <[Renny.VanderVelde@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Renny.VanderVelde@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** EXTERNAL: Niagara

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Hi Rene,

Just to let you know we did not dive the ROV on the Niagara, the weather wasn't very good this time around.

Hopefully, we will get there with the Manawanui sometime in the future.

Best Regards

9(2)(a)

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9(2)(a)

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# HMNZS MANAWANUI

## ROV SURVEY - RMS NIAGARA

6 Apr 22



**Mission:** MAN undertook a ROV survey of the RMS NIAGARA, east of the Hen and Chickens Islands as part of the offshore Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) course 22/02 being conducted over the period 04 - 15 Apr 22

### Objectives:

- Conduct a ROV survey of the wreck site in support of Maritime NZ RFIs
  - Obtain further imagery of the state of the wreck (achieved) ✓
  - Confirmation if oil leaks are still present (partially achieved) ✓
- Work towards completion of competencies required for Grade 1 Pilot qualification
  - Safely navigate a wreck and understanding the risks and mitigations involved (achieved) ✓

### Execution

- MAN conducted ROV/Crane simultaneous operations training with ROV surveying to 120m depth
- ROV survey conducted in one phase to cycle through 5 x students
- Time on task 7.5 hours - Survey was conducted in both Ship DP Auto and follow Sub mode
- Survey conducted in Sea state 2, Northerly 1 m swell. Visibility was excellent at 10m+

### Assessment

- Nil obvious material deterioration since last survey in Mar 21
- Propeller inspection indicates they remain in very good condition
- No oil leaks seen from wreck however oil slick (100m low concentration) was visible on the surface
- Visibility allowed for excursion to both western and eastern sides of wreck

### Command comment

- Environment conditions provided for very good training outcomes with all students gaining confidence in the required competencies and significant pilot hours. This included running through entanglement and emergency procedures initiated by the ship in which students were required to return to the ROV to the TMS in an 'Amber' caution condition
- All relevant photos and commentary from the survey will be passed to the Northland Harbour master and MNZ.



# Environmentals

**Forecast:** Fair visibility in early morning showers improving throughout the day.

Winds SW 15- 20kts early AM backing SE 15kts late AM.

Swell 1m Northerly

<b>Sea State:</b>	2- 3	<b>Water Temp:</b>	22	<b>Expected Water Vis:</b>	10m+
<b>HW / Height</b>	1133 / 2.3m	<b>LW/Height</b>	0526 / 0.9m 1745/ 0.8m	<b>SR / SS:</b>	0636 / 1804
<b>Air Temp:</b>	Low 17 High 22	<b>Tidal Spd/Dir:</b>	0.3 NW Ebb 0.3 SE Flood		

6/04/2022  
09:38:33  
ROV COUGAR 2022  
HMNZS MANAWANUI  
PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA  
Dive 08

Hdg 161.5  
Depth -099.5m

Lat 35 51.35762 S  
Long 174 56.41426 E



Ships side Superstructure remains largely intact



6/04/2022  
10:11:40  
ROV COUGAR 2022  
HMNZS MANAWANUI  
PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA  
Dive 08

Hdg 150.1  
Depth -101.9m

Lat 35 51.40257 S  
Long 174 56.41934 E



Mezzanine Superstructure remains intact



6/04/2022  
12:54:59  
ROV COUGAR 2022  
HMNZS MANAWANUI  
PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA  
Dive 08

Hdg 125.3  
Depth -108.5m

Lat 35 51.34010 S  
Long 174 56.40678 E



Starboard Propeller intact



6/04/2022  
13:54:34  
ROV COUGAR 2022  
HMNZS MANAWANUI  
PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA  
Dive 08

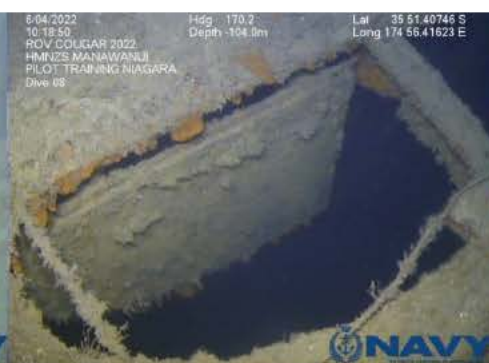
Hdg 285.7  
Depth -112.4m

Lat 35 51.42121 S  
Long 174 56.42369 E



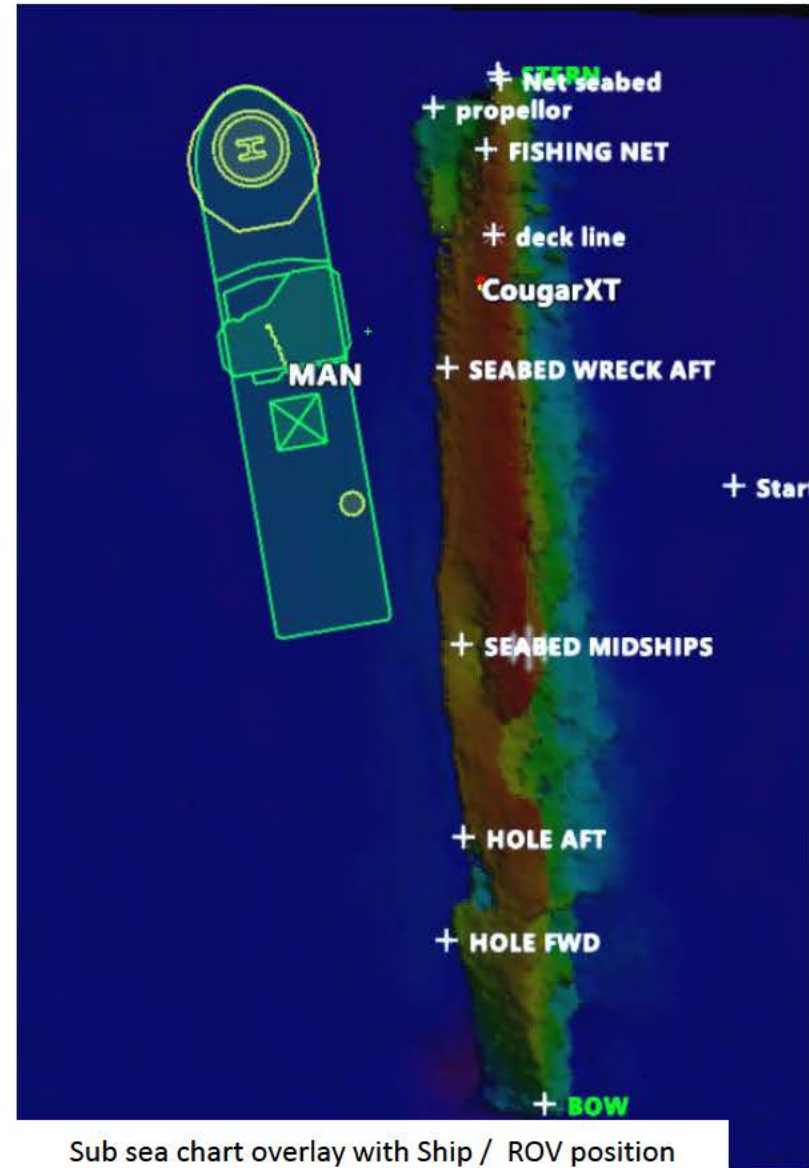
Focsle capstans



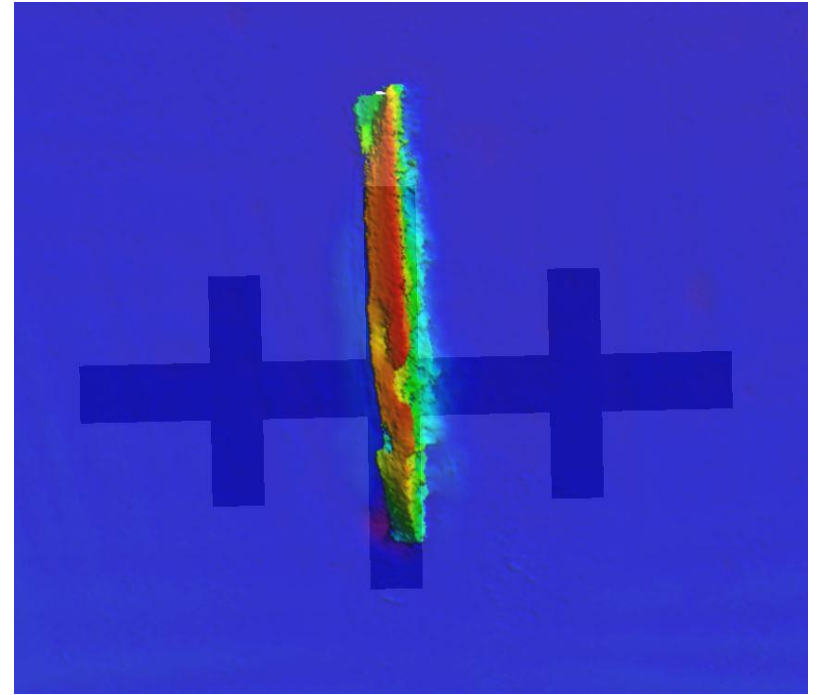
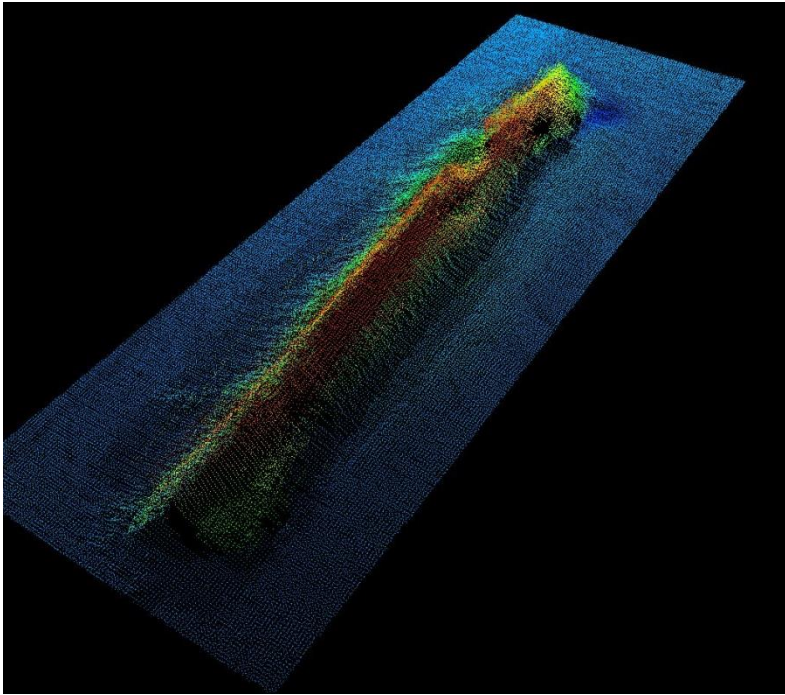




Evidence of oil leaking to surface



Sub sea chart overlay with Ship / ROV position



## Anna Dwen

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**From:** Clinton Duffy [redacted] 9(2)(a) >  
**Sent:** Monday, 11 April 2022 12:56 pm  
**To:** Nigel Clifford; Kirstie Knowles; Renny VanderVelde  
**Cc:** John Galilee; Lyndsey Holland  
**Subject:** RE: EXTERNAL: Sea Change: Niagara update  
**Attachments:** ICUCH\_2020\_B2\_komprimiert-1.pdf

Thanks Nigel and Kirstie,

I only became aware of the boundary change shifting the wreck from Northland to Auckland during the first SeaChange process. Council staff also seemed unaware of it when I raised it with them at the time. There was some talk about listing it as a heritage site in the Auckland Plan but I don't know if that eventuated.

Kirstie and John,

Attached is a report on NZ underwater heritage that mentions the management of the Niagara and other wrecks that you may be interested in. This link - <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/62754451/dive-pacific-170-aug-sep-2019> - is to a Dive NZ article on the wreck, of note from a protected species perspective is the photograph on pg. 13 showing a large black coral tree growing on one of the prows.

Regards,  
Clinton

---

**From:** Nigel Clifford <Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Monday, 11 April 2022 12:29 pm  
**To:** Kirstie Knowles [redacted] 9(2)(a) >; Renny VanderVelde <Renny.VanderVelde@maritimenz.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Clinton Duffy [redacted] 9(2)(a) ; John Galilee [redacted] 9(2)(a) >  
**Subject:** RE: EXTERNAL: Sea Change: Niagara update

Kirstie,

- I'd be happy to discuss the matter with either the Council or the Hauraki Gulf forum if there was interest in the journey to date and the current situation but we don't do any regular reporting per se.

- We have kept DoC aware of any developments/updates as you have us in regards to the Sea Change aspects.

- Please note that we couldn't comment on matters outside MNZ's areas of interest.

Nigel

Nigel Clifford | Kaiwhakahaere Tuarua | Deputy Director  
Safety and Response Systems  
**Maritime New Zealand** | Wellington  
*Nō te rere moana Aotearoa*

T +64 4 494 1208 | M +64 [redacted] 9(2)(a) | W [www.maritimenz.govt.nz](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz)



**From:** Kirstie Knowles [redacted] 9(2)(a) >  
**Sent:** Monday, 11 April 2022 12:14 pm  
**To:** Nigel Clifford <[Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz)>  
**Cc:** Clinton Duffy [redacted] 9(2)(a); John Galilee [redacted] 9(2)(a)  
**Subject:** FW: EXTERNAL: Sea Change: Niagara update

Hi Nigel,  
A suggestion below from Clinton below re updating the Auckland Council and Hauraki Gulf Forum on the Niagara. Let us know what you think and we can always look to facilitate comms if needed (no idea what engagement you have with them already).

Cheers  
Kirstie


**Kirstie Knowles** (she/her)  
Manager Marine Ecosystems – *Kaimātanga Mātai Ahu Moana*  
Aquatic Unit, Biodiversity Group – *Kāhui Kanorau Koiora*  
Department of Conservation – *Te Papa Atawhai*  
Phone: +64 [redacted] 9(2)(a)

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~Toitū te marae o Tane, Toitū te marae o Tangaroa, Toitū te iwi - If the land endures, and the sea endures, so too will the people~



 Please consider the environment before you print this e-mail

**From:** Clinton Duffy [redacted] 9(2)(a) >  
**Sent:** Monday, 11 April 2022 11:11 am  
**To:** Kirstie Knowles [redacted] 9(2)(a) >  
**Cc:** John Galilee [redacted] 9(2)(a); Michelle O'Sullivan [redacted] 9(2)(a) >  
**Subject:** RE: EXTERNAL: Sea Change: Niagara update

Hi Kirstie,

Thanks very much for this. As the wreck now lies within the Auckland Region and Hauraki Gulf Marine Park it would be more appropriate for the RNZN or Maritime NZ to send reports on the condition of the wreck to Auckland Council and probably provide an update to the Hauraki Gulf Forum. Are you able to suggest this to Nigel?

Thanks,  
Clinton

---

**From:** Kirstie Knowles <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
**Sent:** Monday, 11 April 2022 10:27 am  
**To:** Sam Thomas <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Jacob Hore <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Michelle O'Sullivan <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Katie Clemens-Seely <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; John Galilee <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
**Cc:** Ethan Biddick <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Sonja Austin <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Laretta Bensemann <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Elizabeth Heeg <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Rebecca Rush <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Philip Heath <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Clinton Duffy <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; John Wallwork <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
**Subject:** FW: EXTERNAL: Sea Change: Niagara update

Kia ora koutou

**Purpose:** To share an update from MNZ re the Niagara wreck in relation to the Sea Change programme (and protected species workstream).

**Context:** The Government response to the Sea Change Plan included a mention of the Niagara in the Protected Species chapter, and the need to assess oil spill and environmental risk. The Sea Change Director's recently decided to remove the task from the scope of the project and to instead make it a programme wide risk. I passed this onto MNZ contact Nigel Clifford, who has provided an update on MNZ happenings around the Niagara and some commentary on the decision language – see below.

**Action:** FYI only.

**Kirstie Knowles** (she/her)

Manager Marine Ecosystems – Kaimātanga Mātai Ahu Moana

Aquatic Unit, Biodiversity Group – Kāhui Kanorau Koiora

Department of Conservation – Te Papa Atawhai

Focal point for: Local Gov Coastal-SIG, Sustainable Seas Challenge, NZ Marine Sciences Society, Oil Pollution Advisory Committee, IUCN-WCPA,

📞 +64 [redacted] 9(2)(a)

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
✓	🏠	✓	✓	🏠

✓ = In the office; 🏠 = Working remotely; ✗ = Not at work



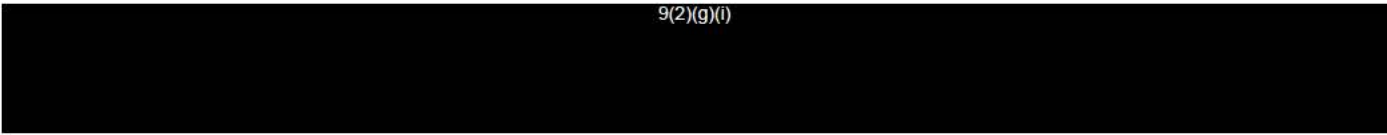
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**From:** Nigel Clifford <[Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz)>  
**Sent:** Monday, 11 April 2022 10:14 am  
**To:** Kirstie Knowles <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
**Cc:** Renny VanderVelde <[Renny.VanderVelde@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Renny.VanderVelde@maritimenz.govt.nz)>  
**Subject:** RE: EXTERNAL: Sea Change: Niagara update

Kirstie,

- Thanks for this. I have added some words in [ .. ] to the reported narrative below for clarification. I can understand why the approach to the risk has been changed.

- In terms of updates:



-- The RNZN with the new vessel Manawanui has a significant ROV capability. There have now been two training sorties using the Niagara wreck site for ROV operator training. Detailed footage and reports have been provided to the Northland Harbour Master and to Maritime NZ. The latest training run was on 6<sup>th</sup> April as part of a two week training deployment. Navy reported a small surface oil slick (as is common in the area). Imagery shows that the wreck remains in fairly good condition with no obvious signs of any significant oil leaks.

- happy to chat at any time, regards,

Nigel

Nigel Clifford | Kaiwhakahaere Tuarua | Deputy Director  
Safety and Response Systems  
Maritime New Zealand | Wellington  
Nō te rere moana Aotearoa

T +64 4 494 1208 | M +64 [redacted] | W [www.maritimenz.govt.nz](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz)



From: Kirstie Knowles [redacted] >  
Sent: Friday, 8 April 2022 1:15 pm  
To: Nigel Clifford <[Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz)>  
Subject: EXTERNAL: Sea Change: Niagara update

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Nigel,

**Purpose:** To update you on a recent Sea Change Directors decision re the Niagara.

**Context:** As you may recall, the Government response to the Sea Change Plan included a mention of the Niagara in the Protected Species chapter, and the need to assess oil spill and environmental risk (see table).

Task	Detail
Assess risk of oil spill and environmental damage to the Gulf	Consider whether any further actions are needed to reduce the threat posed by the RMS Niagara shipwreck to wildlife

Delivery of this task has been flagged as a high risk issue for some time and at a recent Sea Change Governance meeting (agency meeting), Directors made a call to take the task off the delivery scope and instead be raised as a programme-wide risk (to ensure it is still captured and elevated to Ministers) – see meeting commentary in blue below.

This email serves to let you know and to seek any update on the task from an MNZ perspective.

Action: Let me know if you have issues with the decision and any updates that might be helpful for the Sea Change team.

Thanks heaps Nigel.

Protected Species – RMS Niagara:

- Kirstie advised the RMS Niagara risk assessment is unable to progress as intended in the Strategy. The available option for delivering this (funding and delivery through a private philanthropic party) has fallen through, and other options have not been found. This has been raised with Maritime NZ, and while the risk is understood and accepted, they also do not have any available options for completing this work for this project.
- 9(2)(g)(i)  
Required resourcing including submarines [human capable submarines would not necessarily be required. ROVs are likely more than capable for the risk assessment 9(2)(g)(i) and are widely available] is also not available to DOC/FNZ/MPI for this work.
- Directors agreed that the RMS Niagara risk is outside the ability for the project to deliver and should be removed from the scope of the project. This does, however, remain a very high risk [ MNZ would not support the statement “very high risk” at this time. Without the risk assessment work it is not possible to quantify the risk at this time] to the project and the Hauraki Gulf due to the risk of oil spill and damage to the environment. It will be removed from scope, and instead raised as a risk. This risk must sit with the correct government agency responsible for it [It is unclear who that agency might be – Maritime NZ is not responsible under the Maritime Transport Act for risks arising from historic wrecks].

Ngā mihi nui,

**Kirstie Knowles** (she/her)

Manager Marine Ecosystems – *Kaimātanga Mātai Ahu Moana*

Aquatic Unit, Biodiversity Group – *Kāhui Kanorau Koiora*

Department of Conservation – *Te Papa Atawhai*

Focal point for: Local Gov Coastal-SIG, Sustainable Seas Challenge, NZ Marine Sciences Society, Oil Pollution Advisory Committee, IUCN-WCPA,

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Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
✓	🏠	✓	✓	🏠

✓ = In the office; 🏠 = Working remotely; X = Not at work

**From:** Kirstie Knowles  
**To:** Nigel Clifford  
**Subject:** EXTERNAL: FW: Niagara - NZCA letter to Penny  
**Date:** Monday, 23 May 2022 9:22:44 am  
**Attachments:** image001.jpg  
image002.png  
Attachment provided

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Kia ora Nigel,

We've received a letter from the NZ Conservation Authority seeking our DGs referral of the Niagara risks to the Chief Executives Group.

As the lead agency for the Niagara, I would greatly value your views ASAP on how DOC might respond.

You see from comms below that the suggestion is just to refer the matter to you.

Thanks heaps,

Kirstie

**Kirstie Knowles** (she/her)

Marine Ecosystems Manager – *Kaimatanga Matai Ahu Moana*

Aquatic Unit, Biodiversity Group – *Kahui Kanorau Koiora*

Department of Conservation – *Te Papa Atawhai*

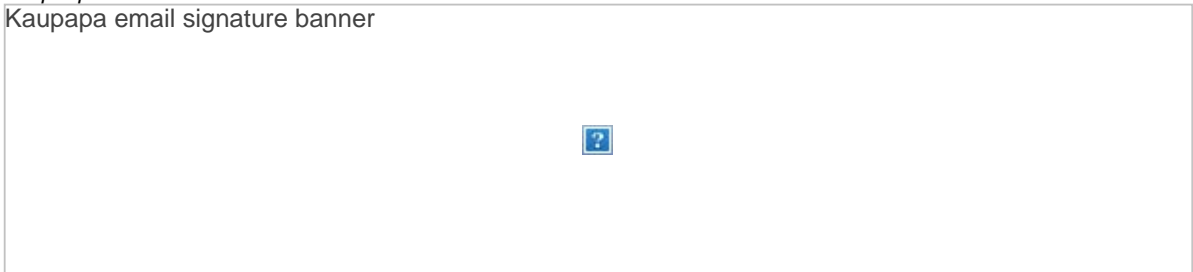
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Kaupapa email signature banner



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**From:** Hilary Aikman 9(2)(a) >

**Sent:** Friday, 20 May 2022 12:58 pm

**To:** Kirstie Knowles 9(2)(a) >

**Cc:** Elizabeth Heeg 9(2)(a)

**Subject:** FW: Niagara - NZCA letter to Penny

Kia ora Kirstie

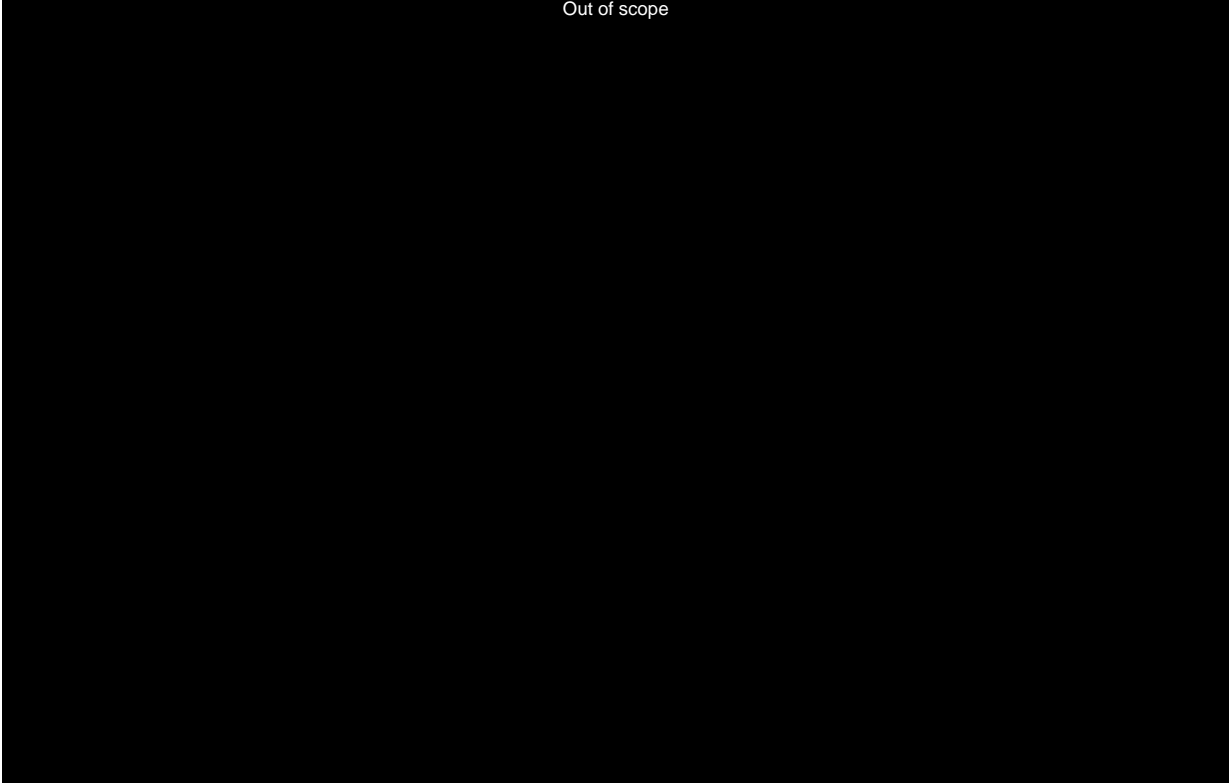
This is to ask a favour on leading the response on this letter. One of those lovely things that doesn't cleanly fit anywhere, 9(2)(a)

Any chance of your team taking this one on? Due back to Penny on 1/6. The conversation we had so far was that its either a short, sorry, not our issue please ask MNZ, or, if Penny was keen, we could say yes she'd raise it and then give MNZ a heads up that she was going to do that – perhaps not the preferred option.

Hilary

Out of scope

Out of scope



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NEW ZEALAND  
**CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**  
TE POU ATAWHAI TAIAO O AOTEAROA

16 May 2022

Penny Nelson  
Director-General of Conservation  
Department of Conservation / Te Papa Atawhai

Tēnā koe Penny

### **Niagara Shipwreck**

At the Authority's April meeting, concerns of the Auckland Conservation Board regarding the *RMS Niagara* shipwreck were discussed. The Authority is similarly concerned about the impact that any potential oil spill will have on biodiversity and ecosystem function loss.

I am writing to you to propose that the Chief Executives Group may be an appropriate forum to raise this concern, as it affects a number of Ministerial profiles; the most affected being Ministry for the Environment, the Department, Maritime NZ, and the Ministry for Transport.

The vessel lies between Mokohinau Island and the Hen and Chicken Islands and is believed to have **four times the oil** that was spilt by the *MV Rena* that ran aground on Astrolabe Reef in 2011. A decade on from the *Rena* grounding and oil spill, we can reflect on lessons learnt and apply these to the impact of the *Niagara* shipwreck's future spill.

The *Rena* response was declared complete in 2015 and ongoing monitoring is required to ensure no long-lasting effects to the marine ecosystem has occurred, although short-term impacts included the death of 2,000 seabirds, with over 20,000 affected. Government response efforts, including clean-up, cost \$47 million, with over \$27 million contributed by the ship's owners. The salvage was carefully overseen by the Government but paid for by the ship's owners at a cost of \$700 million.<sup>1</sup>

In November 2018, the Authority raised its concerns with Ministers of the time and received a response from the Associate Minister of Transport (attached). The letter notes serious and active consideration of the matter, including preparation of advice to Ministers regarding management of the wreck. In 2021, the multi-agency strategy: *Revitalising the Gulf: Government action on the Sea Change Plan* noted that fiscal constraints from Covid-19 have deferred progress on the recommended urgent assessment of the risk to seabird and shorebird populations.<sup>2</sup>

The Authority are concerned by the consistent deferral and de-prioritisation of this issue. It may be that, when the depth of the vessel and the technical issues of dealing with the alleged 1500T of heavy oil on board are considered, the costs are prohibitive to action; however, without an understanding of the risk of spill, amount of oil, and the scope of environmental impact, this decision is not founded. We must stop making decisions for immediate and short-term impact, and encourage decision making that benefits future generations and long-term

<sup>1</sup> [Maritime NZ: reflecting on ten years since the \*Rena\* grounding and oil spill response - Maritime NZ](#)


<sup>2</sup> June 2021. DOC, Fisheries NZ, MPI. *Revitalising the Gulf: Government action on the Sea Change Plan*. Pg 74

resilience. This is an issue that should not be deferred for the next generation to feel the impacts of.

We are encouraged by the potential for cooperation across Government that the Chief Executive's Group provides. I hope this context assists you in conversations with your fellow Chief Executives, in seeking collaboration and understanding of the scope and potential resolutions to this matter. If you should wish to discuss the matter further, myself and Wendy Nelson (Deputy Chair and Chair of the Marine Committee) will be happy to advise.

No reira

E noho ora mai

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Ellison', written in a cursive style.

Edward Ellison ONZM  
Chairperson NZCA

NEW ZEALAND  
**CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**  
TE POU ATAWHAI TAIAO O AOTEAROA

13 November 2018

Hon Eugenie Sage  
Minister of Conservation  
Parliament Buildings

Dear Minister

**Niagara shipwreck**

At the Authority's October meeting, members discussed the Niagara shipwreck, located off Whangarei's Bream Head. It was noted that we had not received an update recently on what was being done to manage and stabilise the potential risk to the surrounding environment.

We were informed by the Director-General that responsibility for the management of the wreck sits with Hon Julie Anne Genter, Associate Minister for Transport. Recognising that this wreck poses a significant environmental threat to the outer Hauraki Gulf, we are writing to you requesting an update on the management plans and any current or planned operational response.

Yours sincerely



Kerry Prendergast  
Chairperson, NZCA

# Office of Hon Julie Anne Genter

Minister for Women

Associate Minister of Transport

Associate Minister of Health

Minita mō ngā Wāhine

Minita Tuarua mō ngā Take Waka

Minita Tuarua mō te Manatū Hauora



RECEIVED  
18/12/18

13 DEC 2018

Ms Kerry Prendergast  
Chair, New Zealand Conservation Authority  
PO Box 10-420  
Wellington

Dear Kerry

Thank you for your letter of 13 November 2018 regarding the management of the wreck of the *Niagara*. Your letter has been referred to me as the matters you raise fall within my portfolio responsibilities. Please accept my apologies in the delay of replying.

Over the course of the year, Maritime NZ has provided Ministers with updates on the wreck. The most recent advice was provided in September and discussed the options available for managing the risks posed by the wreck. That briefing covered a range of issues including:

- the feasibility of any commercial underwater survey of the wreck, including the survey requirements, options for how the wreck should be surveyed, the estimated costs of a survey, and what information is required to support a risk assessment of the wreck; and
- the likely economic impact of a spill based on a variety of scenarios using oil spill modelling.

I have passed your correspondence to Maritime NZ. If you wish to obtain copies of the relevant briefings, please contact [Ministerial.servicing@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Ministerial.servicing@maritimenz.govt.nz) and they will be able to provide you with the information in a manner that is consistent with the provisions of the Official Information Act.

Officials have been instructed to prepare further advice for Ministers regarding the management of the wreck and that work is underway.

In the meantime, contingency plans are in place that collectively cover the risks from, and response to, an oil spill from any source in the Hauraki Gulf, including the *Niagara*. The relevant contingency plans are: the National Marine Oil Spill Contingency Plan, the Northland, Auckland, and Waikato Region Marine Oil Spill Contingency Plans, and the Hauraki Gulf Marine Oil Spill Contingency Plan. Further information about the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan can be found here:

<https://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/public/environment/responding-to-spills/documents/national-oil-spill-plan-2017.pdf>

Please be assured that the Government takes the risks posed by the wreck very seriously and is actively considering how best to further investigate, and respond to, those risks.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me regarding this matter. If you would like to discuss the situation further with Maritime NZ, please contact Nigel Clifford, Deputy Director, Safety and Response Systems, on (04) 4941208 or at [nigel.clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:nigel.clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely



Hon Julie Anne Genter  
**Associate Minister of Transport**

Copy to      Hon Eugenie Sage  
**Minister of Conservation**

**Anna Dwen**

---

**From:** Kirstie Knowles [redacted] 9(2)(a) >  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 7 September 2022 12:19 pm  
**To:** Nigel Clifford  
**Subject:** EXTERNAL: FW: Niagara shipwreck - not approved  
**Attachments:** OTT-199 Niagara response to NZCA - DOC-7031031.docx

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Hi Nigel,  
Sorry for the delay sharing this redraft of the response to the Conservation Board.  
I'm chasing our GD office but no update yet.  
As discussed I expect the meeting with Kirstie is to discuss their approach.

I'll get back to you asap with any further intel.

Thanks for reaching out 😊


**Kirstie Knowles** (she/her)  
Acting Aquatic Director –  
Aquatic Unit, Biodiversity Group – *Kāhui Kanorau Koiora*  
Department of Conservation – *Te Papa Atawhai*  
Phone: +64 [redacted] 9(2)(a)

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**From:** Camilla Lundbak [redacted] 9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 4 August 2022 11:22 am  
**To:** Sandra Griffiths [redacted] 9(2)(a) >  
**Cc:** Kirstie Knowles [redacted] 9(2)(a)  
**Subject:** FW: Niagara shipwreck - not approved

Sandra,

Re. OTE-199. On Niagara shipwreck

This got sent to me while I was off sick and has not been forwarded (checked with Kirstie) – context below in yellow highlight.

Best,  
Camilla

---

**From:** Kirstie Knowles [redacted] >  
**Sent:** Monday, 18 July 2022 11:26 am  
**To:** Camilla Lundbak [redacted] >  
**Cc:** Sarah Owen [redacted] >; Marie Long [redacted] >; Mathilde Richer de Forges [redacted] >  
<[redacted]>  
**Subject:** RE: Niagara shipwreck - not approved

Hi Camilla,

**Purpose:** To provide an update as requested regarding the DG response to the NZCA concerning the Niagara.  
**Context:** As per your email, Penny has requested further information and an edit to the response to the NZCA. The response has been edited to reflect her support for talking to the Chief Executives Group – see attached.  
Further context on the points raised are below:

- Outline the risks – the risks are largely unknown, which is why Maritime New Zealand has sought business cases (x2) to conduct an assessment. The fact that there are regular oil ‘smears’ above the wreck is concerning, but without going down to look at the wreck we won’t know the true extent of any risk. IE. The structure could be largely intact and minimal oil held on board, posing negligible sill risk. OR the structure could be very weak and a catastrophic spill a possibility (MNZ do not think this is likely however).
- How we will keep an eye on identified risks? We will continue to liaise with colleagues at Maritime New Zealand to monitor any changes in spill occurrence.
- Marie outlined that this does not fall within the area of DOC’s responsibility, so while not wishing to overstep our responsibilities it would be useful to come back to your suggestion in the final bullet point below. To consider what options/hooks DOC may have to help lean for a discussion to be had on a future path, for example the letter queried CE grouping and Ministers. Our principle concern is the risk of a major spill and impacts on the marine and coastal environment in the area, including protected species and Marine Reserves for which DOC has responsibility. With work underway to progress the Hauraki Gulf Sea Change program of work, including new marine protected areas, assessment of the Niagara remains an unaddressed issue and an ongoing political risk. A discussion with the CEs (and the Minister) may help to 1) ensure visibility and ownership of the risk an 2) secure support for resourcing the risk assessment in future. SUGGESTION: Before Penny raises with the CE’s she may choose to first reach out to MNZ – a joint paper to the CEs would be valuable.

If there is anything else I can help with, please don’t hesitate to ask.  
I assume Penny will require a memo or paper to table with the CEs, which we can prepare once dates are confirmed.

Thanks Camilla,

Ngā manaakitanga,

**Kirstie Knowles** (she/her)

Acting Aquatic Director – *Kaimātanga Mātai Ahu Moana*

Focal point for: Local Gov Coastal-SIG, Sustainable Seas Challenge, NZ Marine Sciences Society, Oil Pollution Advisory Committee, IUCN-WCPA,

📞 +64 [redacted]

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
✓	🏠	✓	✓	🏠

✓ = In the office; 🏠 = Working remotely; ✗ = Not at work

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From: Camilla Lundbak [redacted] 9(2)(a) >  
Sent: Wednesday, 13 July 2022 6:54 pm  
To: Kirstie Knowles [redacted] 9(2)(a) >  
Subject: RE: Niagara shipwreck - not approved

Hello Kirstie,

[redacted] 9(2)(a)  
[redacted] Email will be fine, and perhaps a revised draft letter that reflects your advice? Take care,  
Camilla

Sent from Workspace ONE Boxer

On 13/07/2022 6:44 pm, Kirstie Knowles [redacted] 9(2)(a) > wrote:  
Hi Camilla,

[redacted] 9(2)(a) Would it be OK to get a written response back to you next week? Is email bullet points again sufficient or do you need something more formal ie a memo?

Thanks.

Kirstie Knowles  
Acting Aquatic Director  
Te Papa Atawhai - Department of Conservation

Note: I support flexible working and may be sending you this message outside of normal work hours. I do not expect you to respond outside your normal work hours.

On 11/07/2022 5:44 pm, Camilla Lundbak [redacted] 9(2)(a) > wrote:  
Hello Kirstie,

Sandra – for reference this connects to OTE-199

I hope you have had a great weekend. This is to round back on our conversation(s) Friday. I also managed to catch Marie on Friday and she suggested I loop back with you. Now trying to do just so.

I popped down to your desk today but didn't catch you. So here is an email instead – though rarely as good as a chat.

I think it would be really good to get some advice back to Penny along your suggestion when we talked:

- Outline the risks
- How we will keep an eye on identified risks?
- Marie outlined that this does not fall within the area of DOC's responsibility, so while not wishing to overstep our responsibilities it would be useful to come back to your suggestion in the final bullet point below. To consider what options/hooks DOC may have to help lean for a discussion to be had on a future path, for example the letter queried CE grouping and Ministers.

Hope this makes sense – if not please do let me know.

Best regards,  
Camilla

---

From: Kirstie Knowles [redacted] 9(2)(a)  
Sent: Friday, 8 July 2022 3:30 pm  
To: Camilla Lundbak <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>

**Subject:** FW: Niagara shipwreck - not approved  
**Importance:** High

**Kirstie Knowles** (she/her)

Acting Aquatic Director – *Kaimātanga Mātai Ahu Moana*

Focal point for: Local Gov Coastal-SIG, Sustainable Seas Challenge, NZ Marine Sciences Society, Oil Pollution Advisory Committee, IUCN-WCPA,

+64 9(2)(a)

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
✓	🏠	✓	✓	🏠

✓ = In the office; 🏠 = Working remotely; ✗ = Not at work

---

**From:** Kirstie Knowles

**Sent:** Monday, 20 June 2022 9:45 am

**To:** Marie Long <9(2)(a)>

**Cc:** Elizabeth Heeg <9(2)(a)>

**Subject:** RE: Niagara shipwreck - not approved

**Importance:** High

No problem Marie, see below points for Penny:

**Re OTT-199: Niagara shipwreck – response to NZCA**

- The RMS Niagara sank in 1940.
- There has been and continues to be significant public interest in the state of the wreck and the potential for a major leak. This risk increases over time as the wreck continues to deteriorate; oil has previously leaked from the wreck and continues to do so in small quantities.
- Agencies sought formal advice in 2018 and the resulting report recommended that a survey and risk assessment be undertaken.
- Business cases were developed in 2018 and again in 2019 for the 19/20 and 20/21 budget bids to determine the level of risk that exists from a potential leak of fuel oil remaining in the wreck of the Niagara. Estimates at the time for this work were between \$0.6M and \$6.6M for Budget 19, depending on the scaling and phasing of the survey and the need to mobile support vessels from overseas, and \$1.6M for Budget 20, based on availability of a Royal New Zealand Navy vessel. Both bids were supported by the Department of Conservation, but both bids were unsuccessful.
- Assessment of the Niagara was also captured in ‘Revitalising the Gulf’ - the Government’s strategy in response to the call for action made by the 2017 Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan (the Sea Change Plan). However, current funding is insufficient for the Sea Change programme and the Niagara assessment was deprioritised.
- In providing your draft response, we consulted with colleagues at Maritime New Zealand, the agency responsible for maritime incident response (inc. oil spills). 9(2)(g)(i)
- Should you chose to elevate this issue to the Chief Executives Group and/or the Minister, we would be happy to support you.

Feel free to edit as you see fit or ask away for any more detail you require.

Thanks,

**Kirstie Knowles** (she/her)

Marine Ecosystems Manager – *Kaimātanga Mātai Ahu Moana*

Aquatic Unit, Biodiversity Group – *Kāhui Kanorau Koiora*

Department of Conservation – Te Papa Atawhai

Focal point for: Local Gov Coastal-SIG, Sustainable Seas Challenge, NZ Marine Sciences Society, Oil Pollution Advisory Committee, IUCN-WCPA,

+64 [redacted] 9(2)(a)

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
✓	🏠	✓	✓	🏠

✓ = In the office; 🏠 = Working remotely; ✗ = Not at work



From: Marie Long <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
 Sent: Sunday, 19 June 2022 8:02 pm  
 To: Kirstie Knowles <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Elizabeth Heeg <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
 Subject: RE: Niagara shipwreck - not approved

Hi Kirstie

Given Penny has limited time maybe we can provide her some bullet points back to Sandra that gives a bit more context to our response.

Cheers  
Marie

Marie Long  
 Deputy Director-General | Biodiversity  
 Department of Conservation | Te Papa Atawhai  
 Phone: +64 [redacted] 9(2)(a) | [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)



From: Kirstie Knowles <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
 Sent: Thursday, 9 June 2022 11:59 am  
 To: Elizabeth Heeg <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Marie Long <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
 Subject: RE: Niagara shipwreck - not approved

I'm happy to brief you/Penny Marie. Assume that's a verbal thing when she's back?

Kirstie Knowles (she/her)  
 Marine Ecosystems Manager – Kaimātanga Mātai Ahu Moana  
 Aquatic Unit, Biodiversity Group – Kāhui Kanorau Koiora  
 Department of Conservation – Te Papa Atawhai

+64 [redacted] 9(2)(a)

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
✓	🏠	✓	✓	🏠

✓ = In the office; 🏠 = Working remotely; X = Not at work



**From:** Elizabeth Heeg <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 9 June 2022 9:26 am  
**To:** Marie Long <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Kirstie Knowles <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
**Subject:** RE: Niagara shipwreck - not approved

No worries, both Kirstie and Kris have it. It's a risky situation but it's also MaritimeNZ responsibility ultimately.

Thanks  
E

**From:** Marie Long <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 9 June 2022 9:25 am  
**To:** Elizabeth Heeg <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>; Kirstie Knowles <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Niagara shipwreck - not approved

Hi Elizabeth and Kirstie

Will need more context on this please.

Cheers Marie

Sent from Workspace ONE Boxer

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Sandra Griffiths <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
**Date:** 9/06/2022 9:21 am  
**Subject:** Niagara shipwreck - not approved  
**To:** Marie Long <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>  
**Cc:** Alice Girton <[redacted] 9(2)(a)>

Hi Marie

Looks like Penny requires further discussion on this.....altho not sure when that will be (looking at her diary), definitely not until July at the earliest. Please advise.

Nā  
Sandra

OTT-199  
20 July 2022

Edward Ellison ONZM  
Chairperson NZCA

Tēnā koe Edward

### **Niagara shipwreck**

Thank you for your letter to me dated 16 May 2022 in which you raised your concerns about the *RMS Niagara* shipwreck and suggest that I raise the matter with the Chief Executives Group.

I have considered your request carefully and am aware that our colleagues at Maritime New Zealand have extensively explored options to conduct a survey and risk assessment to avert a major environmental incident. Government has elected not to fund this work at this time due to fiscal constraints. Nevertheless, I agree that the risks posed by the vessel warrant ongoing discussion and as such I agree that raising the matter with the Chief Executives Group is appropriate.

In the interim, please be assured that the Department will continue to keep a close eye on opportunities to determine the risks posed by the *Niagara* and stay abreast of oil pollution management through our involvement in the Oil Pollution Advisory Committee (OPAC).

Nāku noa, nā

Penny Nelson  
Director General  
Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawha

## Anna Dwen

---

**From:** Kirstie Hewlett  
**Sent:** Monday, 19 September 2022 5:44 pm  
**To:** Penny Nelson  
**Cc:** Nigel Clifford  
**Subject:** Niagara Background

Kia ora Penny

I hope all is well with you and looking forward to meeting Thursday.

Ahead of the meeting we thought it might be good to provide some background from the Niagara from MNZ.

- Concerns over the potential of a marine oil spill from the wreck of the Niagara have been raised on numerous occasions over the last 20 years or more. At different points in time these concerns have led to pressure for remediation action to reduce the potential environmental risks. Successive Governments have not supported these requests.
- Following a resurgence of interest in 2017/18, MNZ looked initially at the UK approach to managing the risk of oil leaking into the marine environment from wrecks. That process laid out a three stage process that might be followed – Stage 1 - an initial desk-top assessment using known information about the wreck; Stage 2 - a detailed investigation of the wreck by an underwater survey coupled with a consideration of environmental factors relevant to the wreck to give a specific risk assessment; and Stage 3 – possibly an operation to recover oil from the wreck if the risk assessment suggested this was appropriate.
- The Stage 1 desk top assessment is very high level and if there is little information available it cannot provide a very high level of confidence in the risk. MNZ conducted this assessment and highlighted as part of that work that given the available, verifiable information which was very limited (in particular no clear understanding of what oil might or might not remain in the wreck) the recommended option was to undertake a comprehensive underwater survey and develop a detail risk assessment using that information, including consideration of the environmental factors.
- After we provided this advice to Ministers, Maritime NZ was requested by Ministers Genter and Sage to prepare a budget bid for the recommended option for Government to consider. Following extensive technical and operational work – including from overseas and NZ based experts in relevant fields - this was done for the budget round in 2018/19. It was not successful given the funding pressures at that time. The Budget bid was revised and re-submitted in the budget round for 2020/21 but was unsuccessful again given the funding pressures at that time. Government is on record as stating that due to funding pressures it is not possible to undertake the survey/risk assessment.
- There have been extensive OIAs around this matter in general and releases of much of the information and papers provided to Government including redacted versions of the two comprehensive business cases that underpinned the budget bids. MNZ does not have funding that can be used to undertake this work. Media and concerned parties continue to show interest in the matter. The most recent activity revolved around a potential private survey funded by a US billionaire but this eventually came to nothing. 9(2)(g)(i)

See you Thursday.

Ngā mihi

**Kirstie Hewlett** (she/her) | Director/Chief Executive  
**Maritime New Zealand** | Wellington  
*Nō te rere moana Aotearoa*  
**M** +64 021 668 159 | **W** [maritimenz.govt.nz](http://maritimenz.govt.nz)



**From:** [Nigel Clifford](#)  
**To:** 9(2)(a)  
**Subject:** Follow up - DoC Maritime NZ CEs catch Up  
**Date:** Wednesday, 28 September 2022 3:17:00 pm  
**Attachments:** Attachment provided

---

Penny,

- Good to meet you today. We briefly discussed the uncertainty around the volume of heavy Fuel Oil that might remain in the wreck of the **Niagara**.

- Attached are two slides extracted from a 2017 presentation by then Councillor Mike Lee to the Auckland Conservation Board (15 February 2017). These slides show a schematic layout of the vessel indicating oil tank locations and maximum capacities and then a slide with a calculation of the estimated amount of oil that might have been remaining in the wreck at that time. That estimate uses the following key assumptions:

- Maximum vessel fuel capacity – 4,324 tonne
- Fuel capacity lost due to destroyed tanks – 1,958 tonnes, (unclear if this accounts for both sinking damage and bullion recovery damage or just sinking damage),
- Remaining fuel tank capacity – 2,366 tonnes,
- Fuel used in voyage Sydney to Auckland – 400 tonnes,
- Oil leakage over 75 years to 2017 @ 0.5 tonnes per annum – 38 tonnes,
- Fuel possibly remaining in wreck in 2017 – 1,634 tonnes.

- It is not possible to be certain around aspects of these assumptions. This 2017 estimated fuel remaining figure was the headline amount publicised at that time when postulating the risks around a future large scale release of oil from the wreck.

- Maritime NZ in its work on these matters has been very clear that there can be no certainty around the amount of oil remaining in the wreck. It is possible that it could be more than the 2017 estimate given the assumptions but also possible that it could be substantially less. The 2017 presentation figure assumed a loss of 0.5 tonnes of oil per year totalling some 38 tonnes by 2017. This loss rate is approximately 1.4 litres of oil per day average to 2017.

- In visits to the wreck site when oil has been reported at the surface Maritime NZ has observed constant small releases of oil reaching the surface. These are very small amounts but they are fairly constant. Calculation in 2022 suggests that if the actual loss rate averages 30 litres per day then total fuel lost to today would be in the order of 900 tonnes – leaving residual fuel at some 780 tonnes – still a relatively substantial amount. If the loss rate was 70 litres per day then residual fuel would be approaching zero today. Operational experience of marine oil spills shows that it is very challenging to accurately quantify loss rates and oil volumes from oil seen at the surface/in slicks that spread extremely thinly across the surface. The key point is that the amount of oil remaining in the wreck is unknown given all the factors at play but it is highly likely that it has been substantially reduced from the amount at the time of the sinking both by the release due to the damage from the mines, the release when the gold bullion strong-room was breached with explosives AND by continual small losses over the many years since the vessel was sunk.

- Very happy to meet with the NZCA to discuss the work undertaken over the years. Regards,  
Nigel

Nigel Clifford | Deputy Chief Executive  
Response, Security and Safety Services

**Maritime New Zealand** | Wellington

*No te rere moana Aotearoa*

M +64 9(2)(a) | W [www.maritimenz.govt.nz](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz)

## OIL REMAINING IN WRECK – ASSUMPTION

(NOTE – TOTAL CAPACITY 4,324 TONS - DESTROYED TANKS – No3 Hold, Side boiler fwd Pt & Stb, Side boiler mid Pt & Stb, No3 wb = LOSS 1,958 TONS)

### ESTIMATED TANKS WITH OIL

### CONTENT – TONS OIL

MID CROSS - PT	273
MID CROSS - STB	285 (?)
SIDE BOILER ROOM – AFT PT	236
SIDE BOILER ROOM – AFT STB	236
AFT CROSS – PT	411
AFT CROSS – STB	389
WB 4 & 5	536
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>2,366TONS</u>

### ESTIMATE OIL REMAINING

INTACT TANKS LESS STB MID CROSS (285)	2,081
LESS - OIL USED FROM SYDNEY? SAY	400
LESS - 75 YEARS OIL LEAKAGE	<u>38 (0.5 ton PA)</u>
	<u>1,643 TONS REMAINING</u>



**From:** 9(2)(a)  
**To:** [Nigel Clifford](#)  
**Subject:** EXTERNAL: Re: ROV work - Niagara  
**Date:** Thursday, 8 December 2022 7:45:48 am  
**Attachments:** [Dive 08\\_22-04-06\\_09.59.56\\_C4.jpg](#)  
[Dive 08\\_22-04-06\\_10.00.24\\_C4.jpg](#)  
[Dive 08\\_22-04-06\\_10.00.59\\_C4.jpg](#)  
[Dive 08\\_22-04-06\\_10.01.11\\_C4.jpg](#)  
[Dive 08\\_22-04-06\\_10.11.16\\_C4.jpg](#)  
[Dive 08\\_22-04-06\\_13.17.41\\_C4.jpg](#)  
[Dive 08\\_22-04-06\\_13.18.24\\_C4.jpg](#)  
[Dive 08\\_22-04-06\\_13.19.12\\_C4.jpg](#)  
[Dive 08\\_22-04-06\\_13.20.33\\_C4.jpg](#)  
[Dive 08\\_22-04-06\\_13.54.09\\_C4.jpg](#)  
[Dive 08\\_22-04-06\\_13.55.23\\_C4.jpg](#)  
[IMG\\_7454.jpg](#)

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Morning Nigel,

Please see attached photos from our last visit to the Niagara in April. You can see through the wreck suggesting the main structures within the wreck are breaking down.

These photos are officially owned by the Navy so please control distribution, by all means show them.

Regards,

9(2)(a)

---

**From:** Nigel Clifford <[Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Date:** Thursday, 8 December 2022 at 07:18

**To:** "9(2)(a)"

**Subject:** ROV work - Niagara

9(2)(a)

Hope all goes well. Can you give me a quick call to catch up on your recent ROV work at the Niagara site?

Thanks,

Nigel

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6/04/2022

10:00:21

ROV COUGAR 2022

HMNZS MANAWANUI

PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA

Dive 08

Hdg 149.8

Depth -100.8m

Lat 35 51.38319 S

Long 174 56.41056 E



**NAVY**

TE TĀUĀ MOANA O AOTEAROA

6/04/2022

10:00:49

ROV COUGAR 2022

HMNZS MANAWANUI

PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA

Dive 08

Hdg 153.3

Depth -101.1m

Lat 35 51.38348 S

Long 174 56.41183 E



**NAVY**

TE TAUA MOANA O AOTEAROA

6/04/2022

10:01:23

ROV COUGAR 2022

HMNZS MANAWANUI

PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA

Dive 08

Hdg 143.7

Depth -101.5m

Lat 35 51.38439 S

Long 174 56.41217 E



**NAVY**

TĒTAU, WĪKANA O'ĀSTERĪKA

6/04/2022

10:01:36

ROV COUGAR 2022

HMNZS MANAWANUI

PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA

Dive 08

Hdg 153.2

Depth -102.3m

Lat 35 51.38444 S

Long 174 56.41258 E



**NAVY**

TE TAUA WHANA O AOTEAROA

6/04/2022

10:11:40

ROV COUGAR 2022

HMNZS MANAWANUI

PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA

Dive 08

Hdg 150.1

Depth -101.9m

Lat 35 51.40257 S

Long 174 56.41934 E



**NAVY**

TE TAUA MOANA O AOTEAROA

6/04/2022

13:18:05

ROV COUGAR 2022

HMNZS MANAWANUI

PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA

Dive 08

Hdg 132.0

Depth -099.1m

Lat 35 51.37923 S

Long 174 56.41612 E



**NAVY**

TE TAUA MOANA O AOTEAROA

6/04/2022

13:18:49

ROV COUGAR 2022

HMNZS MANAWANUI

PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA

Dive 08

Hdg 130.8

Depth -097.7m

Lat 35 51.38279 S

Long 174 56.41561 E



**NAVY**

TE TAUA MOANA O AOTEAROA

6/04/2022

13:19:36

ROV COUGAR 2022

HMNZS MANAWANUI

PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA

Dive 08

Hdg 146.7

Depth -098.0m

Lat 35 51.38530 S

Long 174 56.41340 E



**NAVY**

TE TAUA MOANA O AOTEAROA

6/04/2022

13:20:57

ROV COUGAR 2022

HMNZS MANAWANUI

PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA

Dive 08

Hdg 140.3

Depth -099.1m

Lat 35 51.39592 S

Long 174 56.41314 E



**NAVY**

TE TAUA MOANA O AOTEAROA

6/04/2022

13:54:34

ROV COUGAR 2022

HMNZS MANAWANUI

PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA

Dive 08

Hdg 285.7

Depth -112.4m

Lat 35 51.42121 S

Long 174 56.42369 E



**NAVY**

TE TAUA MOANA O AOTEAROA

6/04/2022

13:55:48

ROV COUGAR 2022

HMNZS MANAWANUI

PILOT TRAINING NIAGARA

Dive 08

Hdg 281.9

Depth -112.0m

Lat 35 51.41986 S

Long 174 56.42291 E



**NAVY**

TE TAUA MOANA O AOTEAROA



**From:** 9(2)(a)  
**To:** [Nigel Clifford](#)  
**Subject:** EXTERNAL: Re: Out of scope  
**Date:** Friday, 16 December 2022 12:54:37 pm  
**Attachments:** [CUBE\\_0.5m.PNG](#)  
[Snip\\_1.PNG](#)  
[Snip\\_2.PNG](#)  
[Snip\\_3.PNG](#)  
[Snip\\_4.PNG](#)

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-----  
**WARNING!!!**

[Attachment detected]  
[Only open this attachment if you are confident it is safe.]  
-----

Hi Nigel,

out of scope

Please see attached MBES stills of the Niagara.

Enjoy the holidays.

Regards,

9(2)(a)

---

**From:** Nigel Clifford <[Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Date:** Friday, 16 December 2022 at 12:02

**To:** 9(2)(a)

**Subject:** Out of scope  
Out of scope

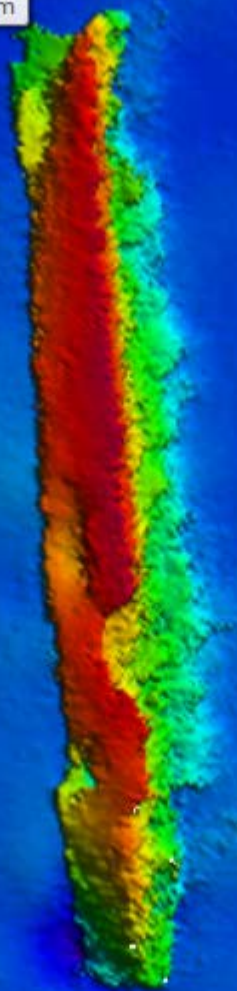
Nigel Clifford | Deputy Chief Executive  
Response, Security and Safety Services  
Maritime New Zealand | Wellington  
*No te rere moana Aotearoa*

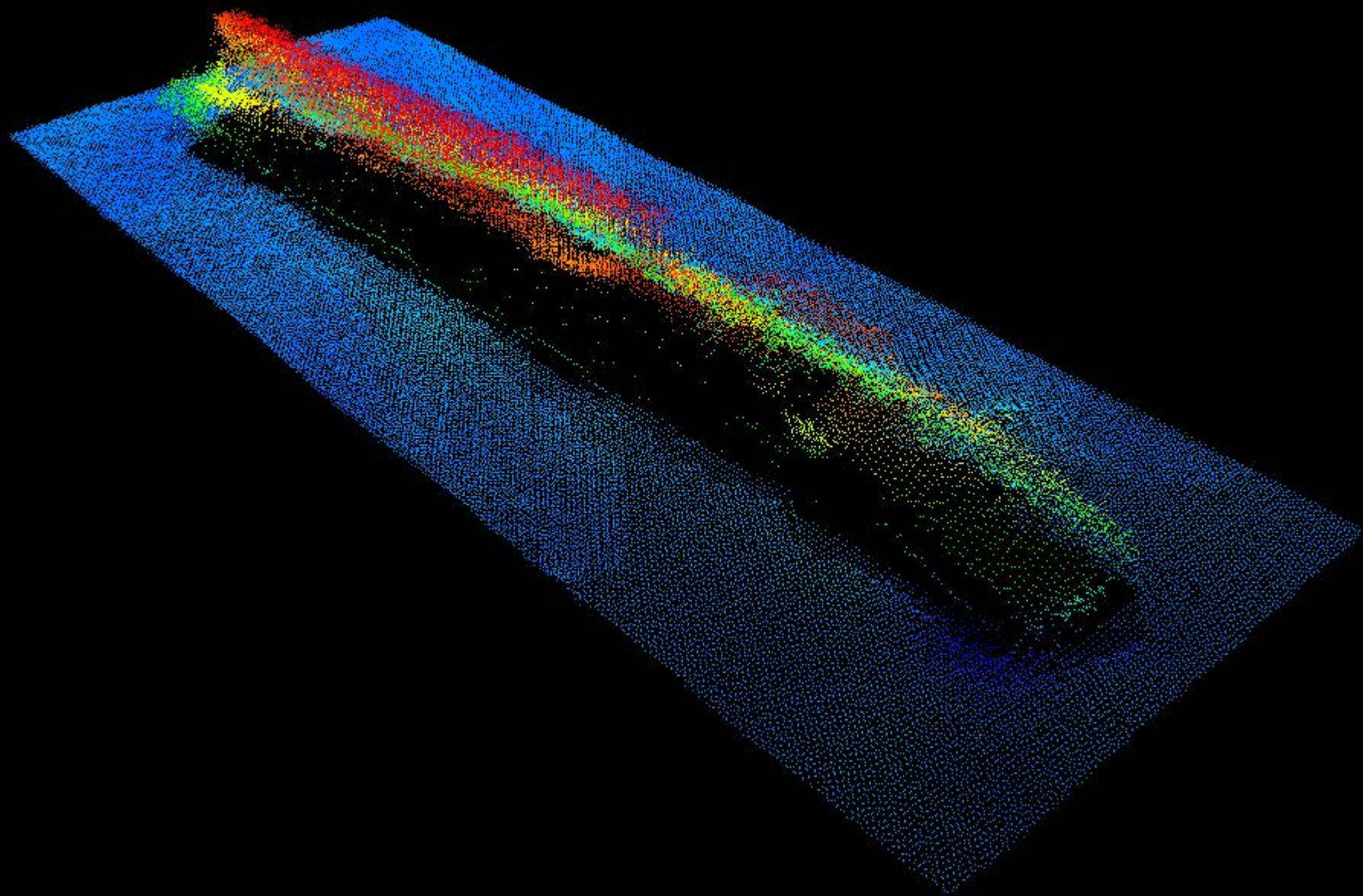
M +64 9(2)(a) | W [www.maritimenz.govt.nz](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz)

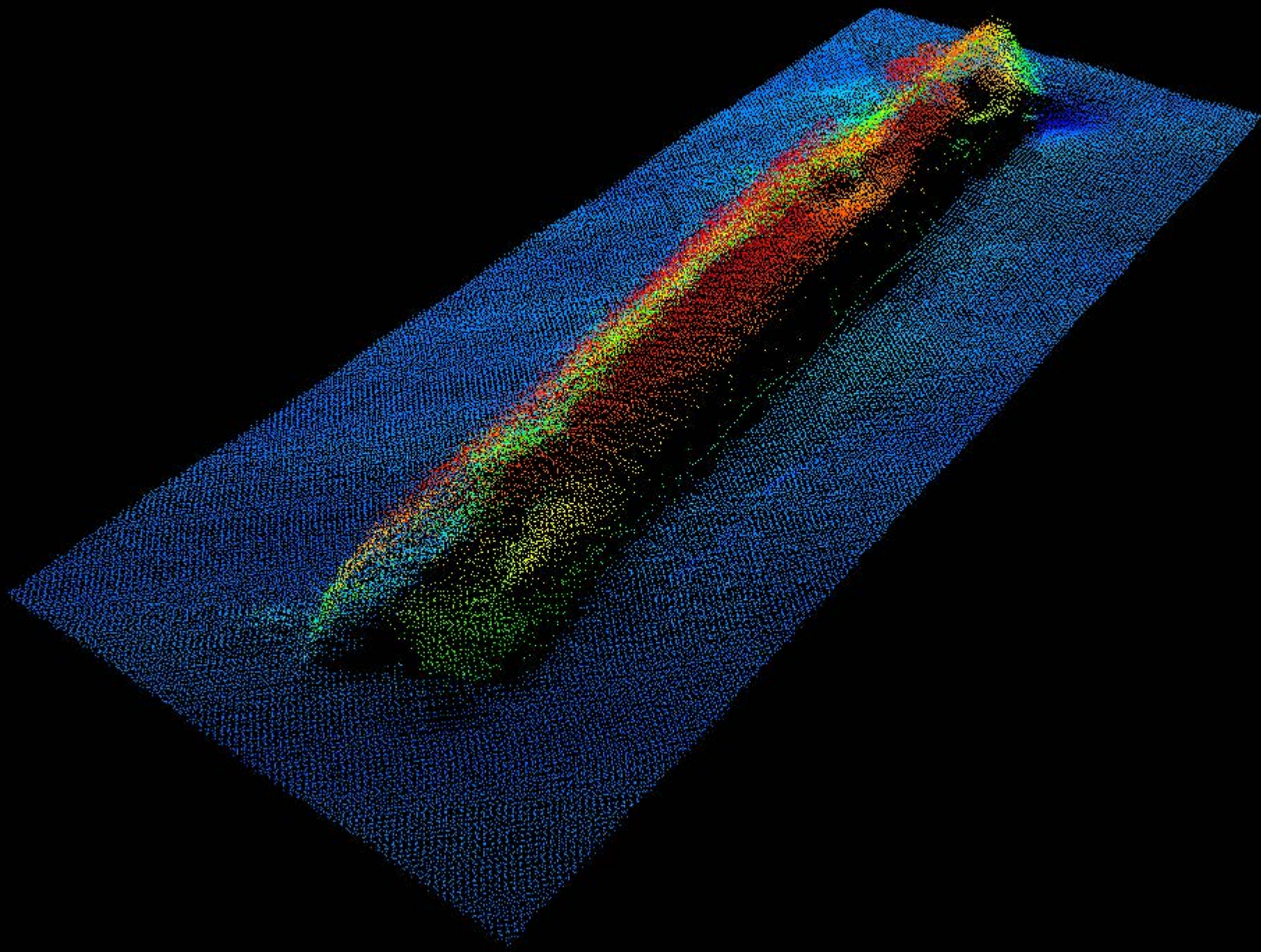
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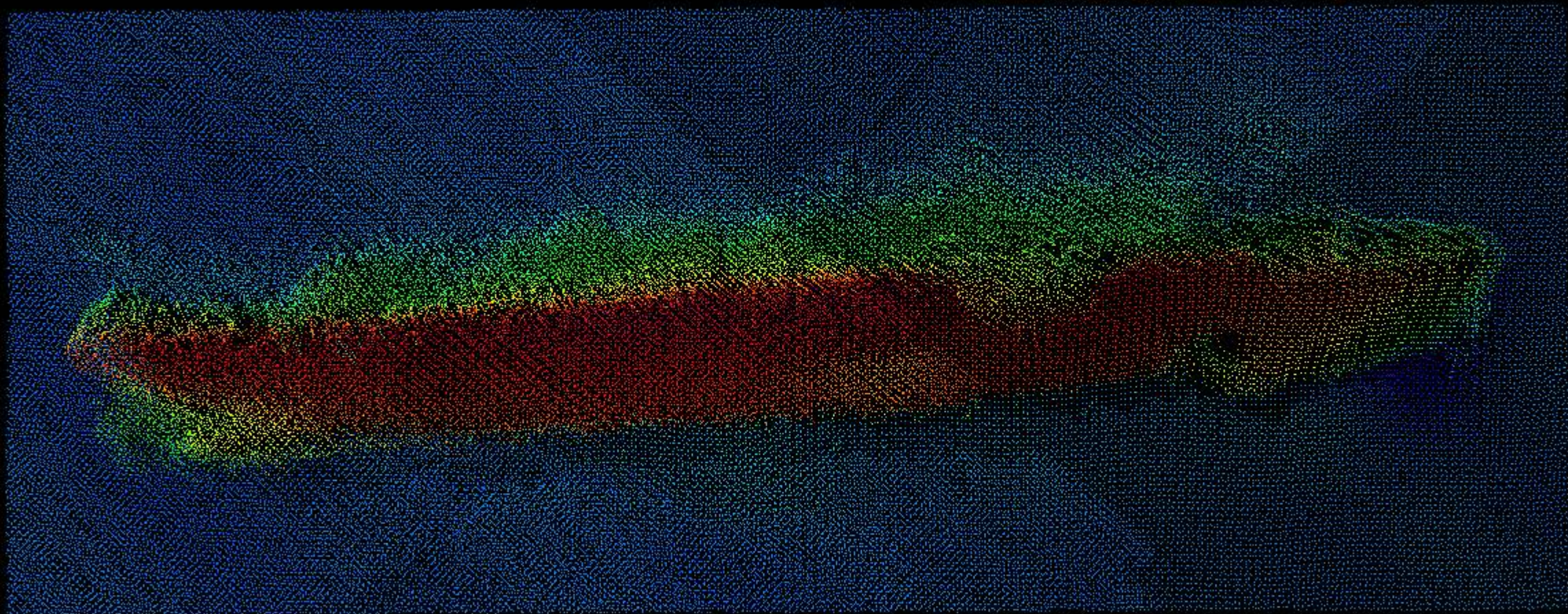
Wellington 6140 Tel: 0508 22 55 22 (04 473 0111) Fax: 04 494 1263. [www.maritimenz.govt.nz](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz)

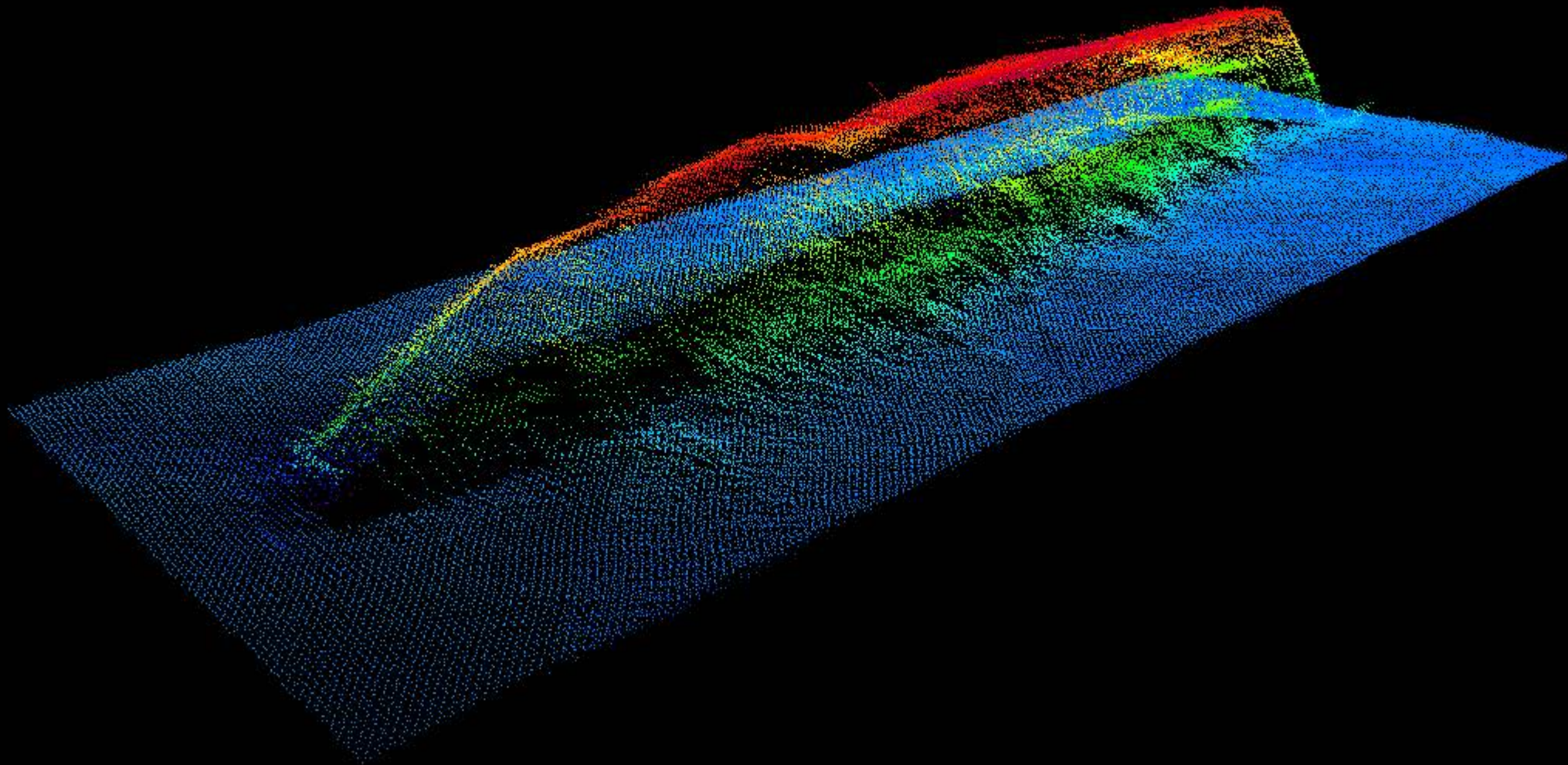
CUBE\_0.5m  
Depth = 120.4 m











**From:** [Adam Walker](#)  
**To:** [Mike McMurtry](#); [Anna Dwen](#)  
**Cc:** [Mark Dittmer](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Niagara info request - FYI only (unless there are flags!)  
**Date:** Wednesday, 5 April 2023 3:39:00 pm

---

Hi Mike,

Thanks for the oversight,

All good from me. It aligns with what we have said previously on the topic

---

**From:** Mike McMurtry <Mike.McMurtry@maritimenz.govt.nz>

**Sent:** Wednesday, 5 April 2023 3:16 PM

**To:** Adam Walker <Adam.Walker@maritimenz.govt.nz>; Anna Dwen <Anna.Dwen@maritimenz.govt.nz>

**Cc:** Mark Dittmer <Mark.Dittmer@maritimenz.govt.nz>

**Subject:** Niagara info request - FYI only (unless there are flags!)

Tena korua Anna and Adam,

**RE – Niagara interest piece – Akl SoE report; cast an eye over it / for your records**

Hope this finds you both well.

I was asked by a past Leigh Marine Lab colleague, Dr Shane Kelly, to provide an alternative view on a piece that was destined for the Akl SoE report.

We have gone back with some proposed text, and have had some discussions which have resulted in the following text (highlighted section is from Nigel, which has been adjusted slightly by Shane).

**[start]**

*THE RMS NIAGARA—A DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN?*

*Over one hundred and twenty metres below the ocean's surface, halfway between the Mokohinau Islands and the Hen and Chickens Islands lies the RMS Niagara. A casualty of World War II, she sank in June 1940 after hitting a contact mine laid by the Germans in a bid to blockade Auckland. Fortunately, no lives were lost, but half of New Zealand's entire stock of small arms ammunition and 590 gold bars went down with the ship—a severe setback for the Allies. An ambitious and highly dangerous salvage operation for the gold, which was estimated to be worth £2.5 million, started shortly after, and the bulk of the gold was retrieved by the end of 1941.<sup>122</sup>*

*Today, more than 80 years later, the Niagara is largely forgotten. Abundant reef life, including rare black corals and deep-sea sponges, now cover the wreck, and huge schools of haku (kingfish) circle above.<sup>123</sup> But beneath this thriving marine community is a potential ecological disaster that is waiting to happen.*

*The Niagara had a heavy fuel oil capacity of several thousand tonnes, and had refuelled in Auckland prior to setting sail. A large quantity of that oil escaped in the immediate aftermath of the sinking, coating the surrounding coastline and wildlife with thick oil. Plumes of leaking oil have occurred ever since, but no one knows how much remains on the wreck. What is known, is that the wreck is gradually deteriorating, and oil leaks continue to be observed. Concerned environmentalists, salvage experts, and local politicians fear a major catastrophe could occur and have spent years lobbying Maritime NZ to extract the oil before that happens. They believe that the question of a major oil spill is not 'if' but 'when'.*

*Maritime NZ (MNZ) is the lead agency in a national-level maritime incident, which includes oil spills. Their resources include: the National Maritime Response Team, oil spill equipment,*

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contracted vessels and aerial assets, and contracted wildlife response. In addition to personnel / equipment capacity and capability, MNZ have well-developed systems and processes for maritime incident responses. They also have agreements with international support agencies and work with the network of New Zealand government agencies.

MNZ agrees that the risks associated with the RMS Niagara remain unclear. What is certain is that there were significant releases of oil when the vessel was sunk and again when the salvage operation to recover the gold bullion took place (the strong-room was blasted open). In addition, the vessel has been leaking small amounts of oil fairly constantly since its sinking. Given this, it is possible that relatively little oil may remain in the wreck after some 80 years, but it is acknowledged that even a small release of oil can have significant adverse effects on the environment.

Maritime NZ has already gone through a comprehensive process that considered undertaking a survey and risk assessment of the vessel. Their work highlighted that, given the way the wreck lies on the seabed, access to some of the vessel's fuel tanks is highly problematic and that, for the wreck overall, any invasive survey work poses a risk of triggering a release of oil if it is present. Alternatively, a non-invasive survey may not provide sufficient information to support a detailed risk assessment. To date, MNZ has not been successful in securing funding to conduct a detailed risk assessment and survey of the vessel.

Not everyone is happy with the lack of pre-emptive action. Tim Moon, an archaeological project director, is hoping to raise enough money to conduct a largely, privately funded survey of the Niagara to determine how much oil remains onboard, and whether there is a risk of a major spillage within the next couple of decades. The hope is that the results of the survey will convince the government to fund the oil extraction from the wreck before it is too late.<sup>124</sup> However, such a survey is not without risk. Accidentally, triggering a release of oil during a privately funded survey could also have serious environmental and personal liability outcomes.

One way or the other, the final legacy of the mine that struck the Niagara will be revealed with time. The best we can hope for is that little oil remains and the leaks gradually dissipate. But as the saying goes – the worst possibility doesn't bear thinking about. The wreck has been described as an environmental time bomb<sup>124</sup> and after 80+ years, the question still remains - will it ever explode?

**[end]**

Nigel, Renny, and Shelley have all approved this.

Can I ask you to have a read and, if there are major flags, then please let me know, by COB tomorrow.

If there are no flags, then I'll inform Shane that he's good to go.

Please bear in mind that the SoE Report is all about enviro status and trends; this is a sidebar.

Also attached is the email trail, purely for context.

Happy to chat if you have questions or need more info.

Many thanks,

Mike

**Mike McMurtry** (tane/he/him) | Manager MPRS – Strategy & Systems

**Maritime New Zealand** | Marine Pollution Response Service | Te Atatu, Akl

*No te rere moana Aotearoa*

**Mobile** (Waea kawae) +64 [9(2)(a)] - **W** [www.maritimenz.govt.nz/contact-us](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/contact-us)

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**From:** [Alisa Yong](#)  
**To:** [Kirstie Hewlett](#)  
**Cc:** [Nigel Clifford](#); [Shelley Tucker](#); [Sharyn Forsyth](#); [Christine Ross](#)  
**Subject:** FOR REVIEW: Niagara Background  
**Date:** Thursday, 27 April 2023 11:40:37 am  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)  
Attachment provided  
**Importance:** High

---

out of scope

**From:** Nigel Clifford <Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz>

**Sent:** Thursday, 27 April 2023 10:48 am

**To:** Alisa Yong <Alisa.Yong@maritimenz.govt.nz>

**Cc:** Shelley Tucker <Shelley.Tucker@maritimenz.govt.nz>

**Subject:** RE: Niagara Background

Alisa,

- See below for some suggested text building on the earlier words. I've updated the recent events and covered the Hauraki Gulf Forum meeting in June.

*Concerns over the potential of a marine oil spill from the wreck of the Niagara have been raised on numerous occasions over the last 20 years or more. At different points in time these concerns have led to pressure for remediation action to reduce the potential environmental risks. Successive Governments have not supported these requests.*

*Following a resurgence of interest in 2017/18, MNZ looked initially at the UK approach to managing the risk of oil leaking into the marine environment from wrecks. That process laid out a three stage process that might be followed – Stage 1 - an initial desk-top assessment using known information about the wreck; Stage 2 - a detailed investigation of the wreck by an underwater survey coupled with a consideration of environmental factors relevant to the wreck to give a specific risk assessment; and Stage 3 – possibly an operation to recover oil from the wreck if the risk assessment suggested this was appropriate.*

*The Stage 1 desk top assessment is very high level and if there is little information available it cannot provide a very high level of confidence in the risk. MNZ conducted this assessment and highlighted as part of that work that given the available, verifiable information which was very limited (in particular no clear understanding of what oil might or might not remain in the wreck) the recommended option was to undertake a comprehensive underwater survey and develop a detail risk assessment using that information, including consideration of the environmental factors.*

*After we provided this advice to Ministers, Maritime NZ was requested to prepare a budget bid for the recommended option for Government to consider. Following extensive technical and operational work – including from overseas and NZ based experts in relevant fields - this was done for the budget round in 2018/19. It was not successful given the funding pressures at that time. The Budget bid was revised and re-submitted in the budget round for 2020/21 but was unsuccessful again given the funding pressures at that time. Government is on record as stating that due to funding pressures it is not possible to undertake the survey/risk assessment.*

*There have been extensive OIAs around this matter in general and releases of much of the information and papers provided to Government including redacted versions of the two comprehensive business*

cases that underpinned the budget bids. In 2021 a private collaborative venture planned to undertake an underwater survey of the wreck using assets provided by a US billionaire temporarily resident in New Zealand. In the event that initiative did not take place. There is a New Zealand grouping called Inkfish that continues to work towards undertaking a private survey. Media and concerned parties continue to show interest in the matter and we remain in contact with these interested parties. In December 2022 Maritime New Zealand, at the request of the Department of Conservation, presented on the Niagara to the New Zealand Conservation Authority. We have also recently been made aware of renewed interest from the Hauraki Gulf Forum who we understand are to meet in June which may result in communication to Ministers seeking reconsideration of previous Government decisions to not fund survey work.

MNZ does not have funding that can be used to undertake this work.

9(2)(g)(i)

Nigel Clifford

Seconded to: Special Projects

Office of the Chief Executive

**Maritime New Zealand** | Wellington

*No te rere moana Aotearoa*

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Core work days Wednesdays and Thursdays. Please text or call at other times if matters require attention

For the Deputy Chief Executive Response, Security and Safety Services please contact:

Shelley Tucker – [Shelley.Tucker@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Shelley.Tucker@maritimenz.govt.nz)

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**From:** Alisa Yong <[Alisa.Yong@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Alisa.Yong@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** Thursday, 27 April 2023 8:52 am

**To:** Nigel Clifford <[Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** FW: Niagara Background

**Importance:** High

Hi Nigel

We were going to include a couple of lines in Minister's weekly report about media queries on the Niagara. Kirstie has asked us to provide some context around that and forwarded the below email she sent to DOC but also suggested we check with you if there's any update since then?

Appreciate your earliest attention to this as the report is due to MoT this afternoon.

Happy to chat if that's easier?

Thanks!

Alisa

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**From:** Kirstie Hewlett <[Kirstie.Hewlett@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Kirstie.Hewlett@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, 26 April 2023 10:53 pm

**To:** Alisa Yong <[Alisa.Yong@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Alisa.Yong@maritimenz.govt.nz)>; Sharyn Forsyth <[Sharyn.Forsyth@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Sharyn.Forsyth@maritimenz.govt.nz)>; Christine Ross <[Christine.Ross@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Christine.Ross@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** Fwd: Niagara Background

Will need some massaging of message particularly at end given going to a Minister but here is Niagara background.

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**From:** Kirstie Hewlett <[Kirstie.Hewlett@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Kirstie.Hewlett@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2023 12:36 PM

**To:** Shelley Tucker <[Shelley.Tucker@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Shelley.Tucker@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** FW: Niagara Background

**From:** Kirstie Hewlett

**Sent:** Monday, 19 September 2022 5:44 pm

**To:** Penny Nelson [REDACTED] 9(2)(a) >

**Cc:** Nigel Clifford <[Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:Nigel.Clifford@maritimenz.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** Niagara Background

Kia ora Penny

I hope all is well with you and looking forward to meeting Thursday.

Ahead of the meeting we thought it might be good to provide some background from the Niagara from MNZ.

Concerns over the potential of a marine oil spill from the wreck of the Niagara have been raised on numerous occasions over the last 20 years or more. At different points in time these concerns have led to pressure for remediation action to reduce the potential environmental risks. Successive Governments have not supported these requests.

Following a resurgence of interest in 2017/18, MNZ looked initially at the UK approach to managing the risk of oil leaking into the marine environment from wrecks. That process laid out a three stage process that might be followed – Stage 1 - an initial desk-top assessment using known information about the wreck; Stage 2 - a detailed investigation of the wreck by an underwater survey coupled with a consideration of environmental factors relevant to the wreck to give a specific risk assessment; and Stage 3 – possibly an operation to recover oil from the wreck if the risk assessment suggested this was appropriate.

The Stage 1 desk top assessment is very high level and if there is little information available it cannot provide a very high level of confidence in the risk. MNZ conducted this assessment and highlighted as part of that work that given the available, verifiable information which was very limited (in particular no clear understanding of what oil might or might not remain in the wreck) the recommended option was to undertake a comprehensive underwater survey and develop a detail risk assessment using that information, including consideration of the environmental factors.

After we provided this advice to Ministers, Maritime NZ was requested by Ministers Genter and Sage to prepare a budget bid for the recommended option for Government to consider. Following extensive technical and operational work – including from overseas and NZ based experts in relevant fields - this was done for the budget round in 2018/19. It was not successful given the funding pressures at that time. The Budget bid was revised and re-submitted in the budget round for 2020/21 but was unsuccessful again given the funding pressures at that time. Government is on record as stating that due to funding pressures it is not possible to undertake the survey/risk assessment.

There have been extensive OIAs around this matter in general and releases of much of the information and papers provided to Government including redacted versions of the two comprehensive business cases that underpinned the budget bids. MNZ does not have funding that can be used to undertake this work. Media and concerned parties continue to show interest in the matter. The most recent activity revolved around a potential private survey funded by a US billionaire but this eventually came to nothing.

[REDACTED] 9(2)(g)(i)

See you Thursday.

Nga mihi

**Kirstie Hewlett** (she/her) | Director/Chief Executive

**Maritime New Zealand** | Wellington

*No te rere moana Aotearoa*

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**Maritime NZ's contribution to the  
Weekly Report to the Minister of Transport  
For week beginning 24 April 2023**

**Maritime NZ in the media**



Stuff has requested information about the RMS Niagara which sunk 83 years ago. This is one of several similar queries we have received in the last six months. We continue to direct these queries to your office.

***Background on the RMS Niagara:***

Concerns over the potential of a marine oil spill from the wreck of the Niagara have been raised on numerous occasions over the last 20 years or more. At different points in time these concerns have led to pressure for remediation action to reduce the potential environmental risks. Successive Governments have not supported these requests. Following a resurgence of interest in 2017/18, Maritime NZ looked into options to assess the risk of an oil leak. We advised Ministers that the recommended option would be to undertake a comprehensive underwater survey and then a detailed risk assessment.

After we provided this advice to Ministers, Maritime NZ was requested to prepare a budget bid. Following extensive technical and operational work this was done for the budget round in 2018/19. It was not successful given the funding pressures at that time. The bid was revised and re-submitted for 2020/21 but was unsuccessful again given the funding pressures. Government is on record as stating that due to funding pressures it is not possible to undertake the survey/risk assessment.

There have been extensive OIAs around this matter in general and releases of much of the information and papers provided to Government (including redacted versions of the two comprehensive business cases that underpinned the budget bids). In 2021 a private collaborative venture planned to undertake an underwater survey of the wreck using assets provided by a US billionaire temporarily resident in New Zealand. That initiative did not take place. There is a New Zealand grouping called 9(2)(ba)  
(i) that continues to work towards undertaking a private survey.

Media and concerned parties continue to show interest in the matter and we remain in contact with these parties. In December 2022 Maritime New Zealand, at the request of the Department of Conservation, presented on the Niagara to the New Zealand Conservation Authority. We have also recently been made aware of renewed interest from the Hauraki Gulf Forum, who we understand are to meet in June which may result in communication to Ministers seeking reconsideration of previous Government decisions to not fund survey work.

Maritime NZ does not have funding that can be used to undertake this work. <sup>9(2)(g)(i)</sup>  
[Redacted]