

## In brief...

## Sewage pollutes Whangarei Harbour

There has been another sewage spill in Northland, this time in Whangarei Harbour, on July 25. The District Council says staff were working to fix valves and pumps, but it could take more than one day to fix. People are being warned not to swim or gather shellfish from the harbour until mid-August.

Earlier, on July 25, the Far North District Council reacted angrily to news that the Northland Regional Council is to prosecute it for the sewage spills from the Waitangi pipeline in February and April.

The Mayor of the Far North District, Yvonne Sharp, says the decision to prosecute would waste ratepayers' money on lawyers, and would be better spent on fixing the problem. The council has let a \$5.7 million contract to replace the offending pipeline between Waitangi and Paihia.

## Pearl of a season for oysters

The Bluff oyster season is winding down, with quota holders reporting better quality catches, better fishing conditions and improved catch rates compared with last season.

"It's been good, actually. The weather's been extremely kind to us," said the Managing Director of Barnes Oysters, Graeme Wright. The bonamia oyster parasite had stayed away, and not "bashed us around the ears," and the fishery was continuing to rebuild, he said.

The General Manager of Ngai Tahu Seafoods, Geoff Hipkins, said feedback had been good generally compared with last year, when Ngai Tahu received complaints about the size of oysters. Catch rates had been good but had varied a lot.

## Diesel escapes from barge

A mussel barge carrying about 10,000 litres of diesel sank in Coromandel Harbour near the Te Kouma boat ramp on July 14.

Environment Waikato said between 3000 and 4000 litres of fuel had escaped, but the impact on marine life was likely to be minimal. Divers had sealed the leaks and a special response team had been assembled.

## KAIPARA COASTGUARD CELEBRATES



JUNE 24 MARKED the fifth birthday for the Kaipara Volunteer Coastguard's dedicated rescue vessel, *Winstone Rescue*.

It was a great opportunity for the current crew to mix with the team who worked so hard for a dedicated rescue vessel. Among those present were the President of Coastguard NZ, Steve Cruickshank, the President of Coastguard

Northern Region, Jodie Foster, and the Chief Executive of Coastguard Northern Region, Dean Lawrence.

Also in attendance, along with his chequebook, was the Managing Director of Winstone Aggregates, Martin Dold, whose company has been the rescue vessel's primary sponsor since she first hit the water.

## Pirate attacks upset shipping

AN ATTEMPTED PIRATE attack on a Japanese cargo vessel off Indonesia on July 4 has alarmed shipping companies plying the Malacca Strait, as well as the cruising community. The crew repelled their attackers, who struck from an unlit speedboat at the stern, by using floodlights and spraying water from a fire hose.

On July 9, pirates boarded two United Nations-chartered ships carrying aid to Aceh province. They stole money and equipment but left the crew unharmed.

About half the world's traded oil passes through the 550 mile channel, which links the Indian Ocean to the Pacific and is only 1.5 miles wide at its narrowest point.

"We urge ships to keep a strict piracy watch," said Noel Choong, who runs the International Maritime Bureau's regional office in Malaysia. Captains should maintain anti-piracy watches around the clock and use bright lights at night to deter attackers.

The Malacca Strait, bordered by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, saw a sharp decline in maritime attacks last year, as coordinated naval patrols by the three countries deterred the pirates. A peace agreement also improved security. But there were five incidents between April and July.

Analysts say the pirates typically focus on gathering cash rather than cargo heists, unless the commodity is easy to repackage and sell. Some pirates try to kidnap crewmembers and extort money from shipping companies for their safe return. The practice has become more popular in recent years, though many ship owners prefer to pay and keep quiet.

## QUALMS OVER MARINE RESERVE

CONSERVATIONISTS AND RECREATIONAL fishers remain at odds over a proposed marine reserve near New Plymouth, despite an attempt at a compromise.

The Conservation Minister, Chris Carter, has approved the reserve, which runs from New Plymouth to the mouth of the Tapuae Stream. But he reduced the size by 116ha to 1426ha, excluding part of the existing Sugar Loaf Islands marine protected area that is popular with surfcasters and a seafood gathering area for Ngati Te Whiti iwi.

But the Taranaki Recreational Fishers Association says the area offers rare safe fishing for small boats, and many may just ignore any fishing ban. The proposal will now proceed to the Ministers of Transport and Fisheries for their concurrence.