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Spheres of Influences!



An Opotiki trust is testing a way to combine employment creation with sustainable kaimoana resources...

Te Whakatohea Trust Board's training unit has launched Project Kaimoana - a multi-pronged initiative involving aquaculture and fishing training, constructing artificial reefs (using reefballs), monitoring species development within reefs, working with hapu and schools, and looking at future opportunities such as taking diving trips to the reefs and speciality aquaculture.

Training unit manager Christina Rolleston (pictured above with the newly constructed reefballs) says the organisation is getting involved in aquaculture because of its coastal marine environment.

Set up in 1989, the unit has run various projects and courses from hospitality to horticulture, computer skills, Maori arts and crafts, Te reo and raranga.

When looking at the aquaculture concept, which has received support and advice from the Community Employment Group, Christina was keen to move forward in an innovative way: "We must stretch our minds and imaginations and see the world as our oyster. Living in rural areas can limit what young people aspire to if they just think from one river to the next."

The organisation came across the reefball concept through :looking at the internet and subscribing to different publications."

The concept involves constructing artificial concrete reefs that "mimic nature." They are placed at sea to create new environments for marine life, and have been tested around the world in over 400 locations including the Philippines, Brazil, Mexico, Australia and the United States.

Participants on the Project Kaimoana aquaculture and fishing course have researched the benefits and possible pitfalls of the reefballs, as well as constructing 30 of them as part of their course. They have spent time observing pipi beds with scientists so that they will have the skills to monitor what happens when their artificial reefs are installed.

CEG fieldworker Hera Katipa says it is hoped the reefballs will contribute to enhancing the fish population as well as paua, kina, mussels and pipi, and provide the groundwork for new aquaculture enterprises to be established. "They may create more accessible fishing areas and encourage some species that traditionally just passed through to stay."

Course participants hope that their pilot project will provide jobs, education and enhance local hapu and iwi development.

The group has resource consent to launch 30 of the reefballs at three different depths -- to attract different species.

"We will be monitoring them very carefully," says Christina.

Students have undertaken diving, monitoring and underwater photography training to enable this to take place.

The next stage for the group is to launch the reefballs and begin monitoring any environmental impact. Reports to hapu will include sustainable harvest suggestions and ongoing consultation.

Successive deployment of reefballs could eventually create an extensive, interrelating reef supporting many species.

The eco-friendly reefball concept was developed in the United States by a group wanting to help restore and protect the world's ocean ecosystems. Human activity and natural disasters have reduced natural reef systems throughout the world, while growth in fishing, scuba diving and boating has increased pressure on the remaining reefs. Long-lasting artificial reefs are seen as useful tools for restoring reef systems.

Christina says that the iwi is gradually realising the impact of commercial fishing and over-harvesting on its precious resource. "If we want to set up an aquaculture industry, then reefballs could be an integral part of that.

"We don't want to be telling the next generation how it was when we gathered kaimoana. We want to maintain, sustain and enhance what we already have. We want everyone in the community to have the opportunity of being able to inexpensively put a meal of fresh kaimoana on the whanau weekly menu forever."

Other stories about Aquaculture:

[Vehicle for Learning and Growth...](#) - Turanga Ararau
(October 2001)

CONTACT

Te Whakatohea Trust Board Training
Unit
PO Box 207, Opotiki,
Phone (07) 315 8645
fax (07) 315 7968,
email: wmtb@xtra.co.nz

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