

Waikawa Beach residents cut off from beach since February as councils pass buck

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Waikawa Beach Ratepayers' Association secretary Kevin Burns in front of the cut channel after it was made in June. The cut diverted the stream that had carved a channel along the seafront behind him.

Tempers are fraying in a fishing-mad seaside settlement cut off from the beach for five months, and its residents want a permanent solution from squabbling councils.

A stream runs through Waikawa Beach settlement, just outside the northern boundary of the Kāpiti Coast in Horowhenua. The stream shifts across the beach, and since February it has cut hard back into beachfront land, causing a sheer drop in the only vehicle access to the beach.

The township's dedication to fishing is so strong someone tried to cut a

new path across private land in the middle of the night, further increasing tensions, said residents' association committee member Miraz Jordan.

"The people who want to get their vehicles on the beach have been extremely frustrated. A lot of people feel the council should be helping protect our coast from severe erosion."

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A view of the manmade "cut" redirecting the Waikawa Stream straight out to sea.

Erosion from the stream's unpredictable movements had been a problem since at least the 1930s, but it sped up significantly in the past three years, with little response from authorities, she said.

"We want a permanent solution. We want someone with

professional expertise to come along and say 'here's what would work'."

Two public meetings about the issue have been packed.

A river cut is sometimes made to adjust the path of the stream, the latest was in late June.



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Waikawa Beach residents check out the new beach cut redirecting Waikawa Stream directly to the sea.

The vehicle accessway was open nine days after the latest cut, but was impassable again, association secretary Kevin Burns said.

"For about a week we could drive across nicely, waving to each other, but it didn't last too long. It's not acceptable.

"Horowhenua District Council have been pretty slow in coming down and in trying to develop a response quickly. They thought it was Horizons [Regional Council's responsibility] and that argument went long and loud, but they've now begun talking to each other.



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Waikawa resident Kevin Burns looks at erosion damage at Waikawa Beach.

"We've had to play a hell of a hard role in forcing the issue. The community want something done and... we're in for a battle."

A district council spokeswoman said staff from both councils had met with residents.

"While coastal issues would generally come under the auspices of Horizons, Horowhenua District Council is also committed to resolving the impact on residents [and]... continue to work with Horizons and the Waikawa Beach community on devising practical, long-term solutions."

Horizons engineer John Foxall said the district council was responsible for the river cuts, which Horizons carries out if the district council covers the \$10,000 cost.

Horizons agreed a long-term solution should be looked at, but "negotiations" were still to be carried out to establish which council was responsible.

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