





**MOUNTAINS TO SEA
 CONSERVATION TRUST**


**EXPERIENCING
 MARINE RESERVES**

Annual EMR Poor Knights Competition Trip | 2026

<https://www.mountaintosea.org.nz/whats-on/poor-knights>

Trip Date	Back up Date	Location
Friday 22nd May 2026	Saturday 23rd May 2026	 Dive! Tutukaka - Tutukaka, Northland

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Sponsored by



This trip wouldn't be possible without the support of Dive! Tutukaka and the Bobby Stafford-Bush Foundation.

Background

Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust via the Experiencing Marine Reserves (EMR) programme has been running this trip since 2002!

The action component of the EMR programme is an essential factor in the students' learning process and one which helps us to assess the effectiveness of the programme at meeting the projected learning and conservation outcomes.

By encouraging students to undertake action that is based on their own experience, the EMR programme aims to empower students and encourage support for marine conservation.

Students need to be able to decide on, plan and take effective action on marine environment sustainability issues that concern and motivate them. The action needs to be aimed at addressing the cause of the marine issue. Teachers need to connect the students' EMR experience and growing understanding of the issue to achievable things they can do that will make a difference for the future and put their idea into action.

The action could have a direct impact on the marine environment to mitigate, remediate, resolve or prevent harm to marine ecosystems. Action may also be about seeking to influence others to make decisions and choices that will result in improvements to marine ecosystems.

To be eligible for the EMR action prize, Annual Poor Knights competition, students must be involved in a group action and/or an individual action project for the marine environment.

Offered to

Students from each school participating in the EMR programme and producing 'actions' from Northland and Auckland (up to 20 schools every year) and 1 representative from each other region participating in EMR (Taranaki, Gisborne, Wellington, Nelson/Tasman, Coromandel, Hawkes Bay). Based on the criteria above, representatives from each of the participating EMR schools/regions will be chosen by your EMR regional coordinator (evidence may be collected at time of completing projects and winning representative/s may be informed by early May).

The prizes

EMR action project prize

Criteria

Action projects that demonstrate guardianship of their marine environment

Judging criteria

NZ relevant

Action reaches beyond the classroom

Action relates to marine conservation, marine monitoring, addressing marine issues and/or building public awareness

You must participate in a class/group or individual action project as well as submitting something individually to be chosen. Tell us about or submit information about your action (use EMR action plan template):

- The course of action you were involved in to make a difference, for the conservation of your local marine area
- Results of the action undertaken to date and any plans for the future.

Your individual submission (class work) to support your action could be judged on the following:

- Your (written or oral) explanation of your first-hand experience with marine reserves or the marine environment
- Your explanation of the difference between your local area and marine reserve (either habitat differences if the two are comparable e.g. same type of habitats or social differences in the way the community threat the marine environment (full protection vs. no protection). This comparison could also be in the form of research (without visiting a marine reserve).
- Your passion and demonstration of understanding of marine conservation, marine reserves, marine protected areas and or/marine issues in New Zealand Your communication and demonstration
- Creativity, presentation, leadership and kaitiakitanga

- Use of NZ marine biodiversity and conservation context (NZ references & pictures) e.g. no pictures of exotic clown fish etc
- Your teachers opinions and recommendations

The Bobby Stafford-Bush – EMR Ocean Art prize

In addition to the opportunity to represent your school or region for the EMR ACTION prize, we will be picking one piece of artwork per EMR region (1 student and 1 parent will be funded from each region to join the annual EMR trip to the Poor Knights in May 2026).

A Living Inheritance - Bobby Stafford-Bush was young but he was passionate about the sea, marine life, art, technology, inventing and making things. He also liked to help people. He was a very capable young man who had his life ahead of him when he was so tragically killed in a car accident at 16 years of age in 2001. Some time has passed since Bobby died and the family have decided that the formation of a charitable trust would in a sense be a living document to Bobby and in essence be an extension of what if he had lived. Accordingly, the Family decided to create a "living inheritance".

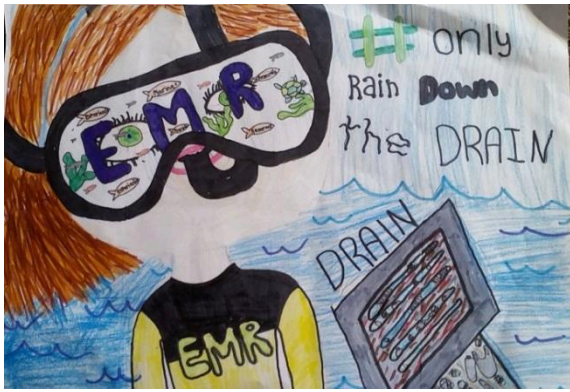
The Bobby Stafford-Bush Foundation supports this special prize for young kiwis that have experienced the marine environment with EMR and display that passion and experience through art. EMR regional coordinators will annually choose 3 pieces of art from each EMR region by the end of April 2025, EMR management and sponsors will then decide on 1 piece of art per region (Northland, Auckland, Taranaki, Coromandel, Gisborne, Wellington, Nelson/Tasman), 1 student and 1 parent/guardian will then attend the annual EMR competition trip to the Poor Knights per region to including flights and accommodation if applicable.

Criteria

Must convey a marine conservation message, such as:

- Protecting or education people about marine biodiversity/marine issues
- Human impacts on your local marine environment
- Marine conservation (different marine conservation measures)
- Marine reserves (rules, boundaries, local marine reserves)
- Differences and similarities between your local area and marine reserve
- Kaitiakitanga

Must mention Experiencing Marine Reserves or EMR is some way. You will also be judged for creativity and presentation. Below are examples from previous years.



Terms and conditions

You must be willing to allow yourself and your project and/or artwork to be publicized in the media and to promote EMR and the Bobby Stafford-Bush Foundation. You must arrange time off school, your own lunch and transport to and from Tutukaka marina (for Northland and Auckland, you will receive detailed trip info closer to time). For participants from Taranaki, Gisborne, Wellington, Nelson/Tasman and Hawkes Bay your flights and accommodation will be arranged and paid for (you will receive detailed trip info closer to time). The Coromandel region is included in the accommodation and will be provided with support to cover fuel to travel to Tutukaka. Students will travel aboard the Dive Tutukaka boat 'Perfect Day' for free. Accompanying parents/guardians from the regions (excluding Northland and Auckland) will pay a small fee of \$ 40 per adult (to cover increased costs this year, please contact us if this becomes a barrier for your participation) . You will need to be at Tutukaka marina by 9.30am. Gear hire for the day will be provided free of charge, but you are welcome to bring your own if you have it. If a parent or guardian is unable to attend, please discuss with your EMR regional coordinator.

Please note that this competition trip is offered on this date only, if you know your child can not make that date or if unforeseen circumstances arise, notify us, the place may be offered to your school's back up person or to another school.

The amount of students that attend from each Auckland/Northland school is at the discretion of the EMR coordinator, the standard of the 'Action' produced and the amount of space on the boat. One student may be chosen from a group project, at the discretion of the EMR coordinator, with regards to the criteria above, in some cases, when contributions to a group project are even, names may be drawn from a hat or students and teachers may be interviewed to determine individual attributes and leadership potential for consideration by EMR.

Contact

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