



AT A GLANCE

# State of our Gulf 2017

Hauraki Gulf – Tīkapa Moana/ Te Moananui-ā-Toi  
State of the Environment Report 2017



Hauraki Gulf  
Marine Park  
Ko te Pataka kai  
o Tīkapa Moana  
Te Moananui a Toi



Hauraki Gulf Forum  
Tīkapa Moana  
Te Moananui a Toi

IN 2000 PARLIAMENT RECOGNISED THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HAURAKI GULF. THE HAURAKI GULF FORUM WAS CHARGED WITH GATHERING QUALITY INFORMATION ON ITS CONDITION.

## PREVIOUS ASSESSMENTS HAVE SHOWN:

*The Hauraki Gulf has undergone an incredible transformation over two human life spans. That transformation is continuing in the sea and around the coast with most environmental indicators either showing negative trends or remaining at levels which are indicative of poor environmental condition.*

*Further loss of natural assets will occur unless bold, sustained, and innovative steps are taken to improve the management and utilisation of its resources, and to halt progressive environmental degradation.*

*- State of our Gulf, 2011*

*Addressing the combined effects of suppressed environmental state, multiple and cumulative impacts, and high and increasing pressure will be technically and politically challenging.*

*Integrated ecosystem-based management is required with ambitious targets and standards.*

*Constructive participation requires stakeholders to move beyond just being interested parties, position taking and lobbying to guardianship and responsibility ... typically associated with kaitiakitanga.*

*- State of our Gulf, 2014*

*The most pronounced recent change to pressures facing the Hauraki Gulf is a surge in population.*

This has mainly been in Auckland, where a quarter of a million people have settled in the past decade. But pressures on the Gulf span the urban-rural boundary.

Cow numbers on the Hauraki Plains have peaked at one of the highest stocking rates in New Zealand, and the Gulf's fisheries have been managed to maximise utilisation.

The Auckland Unitary Plan provides for population growth through a combination of greenfields expansion and intensification, with 15,000 ha of rural land earmarked for future development.



Sediment from a development near Okura Estuary

Demand for new housing must be integrated with a wastewater reticulation system already experiencing regular overflows.

Sand and rock from the Gulf's beaches and islands continues to be extracted to provision city building and transport infrastructure.

Boom and bust industries of the past – sealing, whaling, mining, native forest logging, mussel and oyster dredging – have left lasting environmental legacies.

Development is increasingly sprawling out into the sea. In 2014, 2,900 ha of marine space had been zoned or consented for mussel and oyster farms, with 390 ha for fish farms. Since then an additional 505 ha has been consented or applied for, and time extensions have been granted for processing spat catching applications covering around 4,800 ha.

The Gulf's 20<sup>th</sup> marina has been completed, its 21<sup>st</sup> granted consent, and new vessel berths, jetties and boat ramps built.

Record tourist arrivals and rising disposable income within sectors of the growing population are increasing demand on fishing areas, island visitor destinations and coastal subdivisions including the Coromandel.

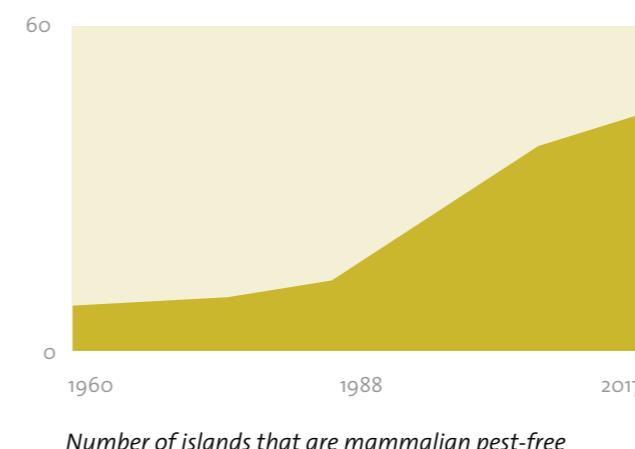
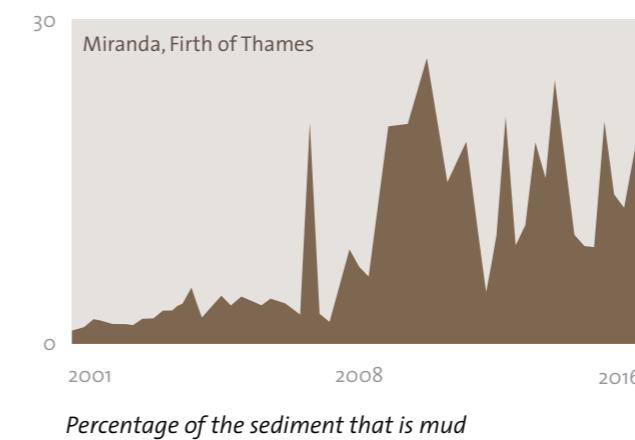
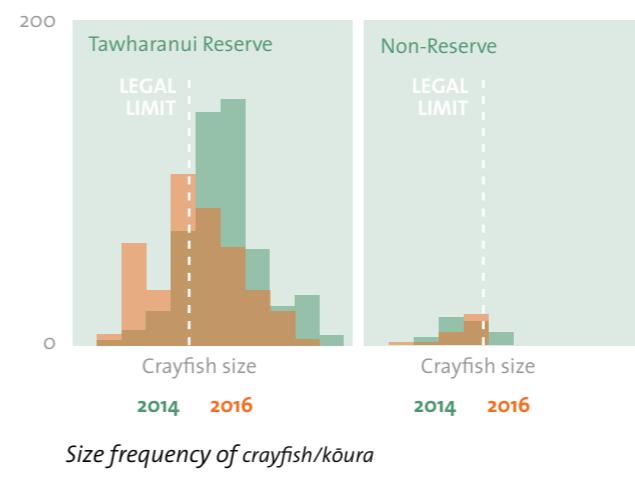
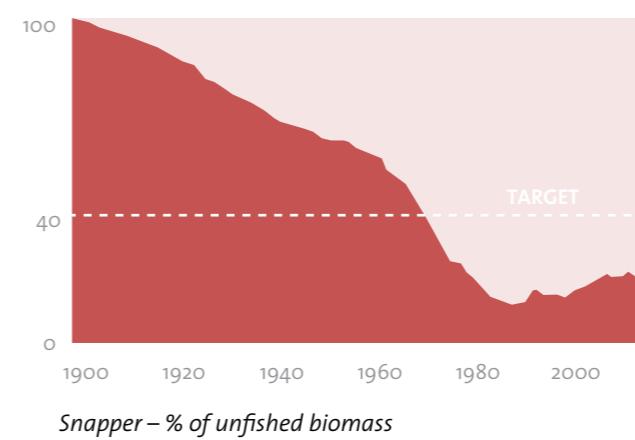
## HOW DO WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

*What happens in one place or realm affects others. An action may have distant or unforeseen effects. There is great potential for both damage and restoration.*

The Hauraki Gulf Forum's triennial state of the environment report is required by the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act to report on the state of the environment, progress towards integrated management and responses to prioritised strategic issues.

Following earlier assessments the Forum adopted a high level framework for action and urged agencies to work collectively and make urgent progress in the following areas:

- R *A regenerating network of marine protected areas and island sanctuaries*
- E *Enhancement of fisheries with improved environmental outcomes*
- M *Mana whenua relationships reflected in resource management practice*
- A *Active land management to minimise inputs of sediments, nutrients and contaminants*
- K *Knowledge utilisation within an ecosystem-based management framework*

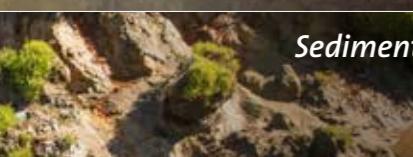


The most significant investment in integrated management planning over the past three years has been the Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari process. This is the first marine spatial plan to be developed in New Zealand and one of the first anywhere in the world driven by ecosystem and mauri-based management approaches. It was initiated as a response to the 2011 assessment and was in an early phase in 2014.

What has this agency-mana whenua partnership and collaborative stakeholder model produced in new commitments and momentum? How do the plan's recommendations differ from agency policy, plans and managements actions generated over the same period?

The 2017 State of our Gulf report is a snapshot of progress made and the challenge ahead.

*Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi ēngari he toa takitini – It's not the work of the individual that creates success but the work of the collective.*

	<i>What is causing change in the Gulf? (Pressure)</i>	<i>What condition are the Gulf's essential elements in? (State)</i>	<i>What have we been able to achieve? Agency-led responses since 2014*</i>	<i>What was recommended in the Sea Change plan (2016)?*</i>
	<b>Fisheries</b> Fishing is recognised as a major influencer of marine systems. The Hauraki Gulf is an important area for snapper and heavily fished for other species. Some of the methods used impact on seabed communities and catch non-target species. Catch managed to maximise utilisation.	Crayfish declining. Snapper rebuild required. Recently located large scallop bed now collapsed. Edible cockle numbers declining. Status not known for nine of the top 15 finfish species and only three are known to be above target.	Crayfish (CRA2) stock assessment suggests abundance is around 21% of the agreed reference level, very likely below the soft limit and requiring rebuild. Commitment to rebuild snapper, but no change to total allowable catch. No agreed pathway to addressing benthic impacts. "Future of Fisheries" review initiated.	Phased withdrawal of bottom contact harvesting. Review of stocks to enable rebuild. Move further along the ecosystem-based management spectrum.
	<b>Chemicals</b> Intensive suburban development and aging stormwater infrastructure in older areas. Improved stormwater management in newer areas.	Low level quality guideline exceedances in many local areas. Lead, copper and zinc stable at most sites. Zinc increasing at more sites than decreasing.	Improved treatment and contaminant source control.	Various actions to reduce and contain contaminants at source.
	<b>Sediment</b> Steep rural land, clear felled forestry, stream banks and increasing urban earthworks vulnerable to high rainfall events.	Major legacy effects on the Firth of Thames (FoT) with ongoing inputs. Other parts of Inner Gulf also sediment stressed. Ecological effects documented in multiple estuaries.	National direction set for forestry, though standards largely unchanged. Multiple interventions through plans, technical guidance, infrastructure investment.	Major new investments in sediment prevention, capture and containment initiatives.
	<b>Mangroves</b> Legacy shifts to higher sediment and nutrient conditions provides suitable habitat for expansion.	Stable or expanding.	Small clearances enabled in response to community demand.	
	<b>Nutrients</b> High dairy stocking rates on Hauraki Plains and established pattern of heavy nutrient loadings to Firth of Thames (FoT). 410,000 cows in Hauraki and Matamata-Piako districts.	FoT river inputs stable or slowly declining from high levels through upgrades to town and industrial wastewater systems and dairy farm management. Uncertainty about ability of sea to assimilate current nitrogen loads. Increasing nitrogen, and algae levels, reduced oxygen, and acidification in FoT water column.	National direction set for water quality to be implemented in regional plans with further consultation.	Various actions to ensure levels do not cause adverse effects. Increase monitoring.
	<b>Pathogens</b> Wastewater overflows common during heavy rainfall events. Septic tanks, vessels and livestock also contributors.	Health guideline exceedances at many Auckland and Coromandel beaches.	Investment in improved urban wastewater systems; including the Central Interceptor and Western Isthmus Water Quality Initiative, subject to funding. Safeswim real time monitoring.	Various actions to avoid discharge of untreated sewage.
	<b>Pests</b> Multiple pathways for invasion through globalised transport networks, increased use and mobility.	Two new marine species, one a potential pest. Continued spread of others.	Strengthened biodiversity investment, agency coordination and policy development. Implementation of ballast water and biofouling standards.	Various actions to identify, manage and mitigate threats.
	<b>Mass mortalities</b> Changing or fluctuating environmental conditions stress populations.	Three recorded events (two shellfish and one fish) assumed stress and pathogen related or unknown.	Investigate to determine cause.	
	<b>Litter</b> Growing population and consumption of plastic products.	Pervasive problem around Gulf beaches, and showing up in fish and seabirds.	Voluntary clean-up efforts limited by funding. Waste minimisation policy and investments planned.	Various actions to reduce marine debris through education, research and monitoring.
	<b>Biodiversity</b> Terrestrial predator and other pressures on native populations widespread and significant except for within island and other sanctuaries. Marine biodiversity impacted by extraction, trophic shifts, disturbance, pollutants.	General decline in terrestrial environments not under active management. General degradation and disturbance of marine habitats, even in small marine reserves due to edge effects. Seabird declines.	Commitments to further predator control (PFNZ2050, community trusts). Little progress on marine protected area policy or community-driven creation. Bryde's whale outcomes improved through shipping protocol. Seabird pledge and monitoring effort.	15 new marine protected area recommendations within a broader benthic habitat restoration initiative and biodiversity investments.
	<b>Coastal development</b> Increasing population and affluence, driving demand for holiday homes, recreational facilities and economic opportunity.	New coastal and holiday suburbs. Expanded aquaculture space, marina space and boating facilities.	National policy provides strong direction for regional policy and regional and district plans.	13 specified aquaculture zones. New strategies for visitors, transport and public access within an integrated spatial package.

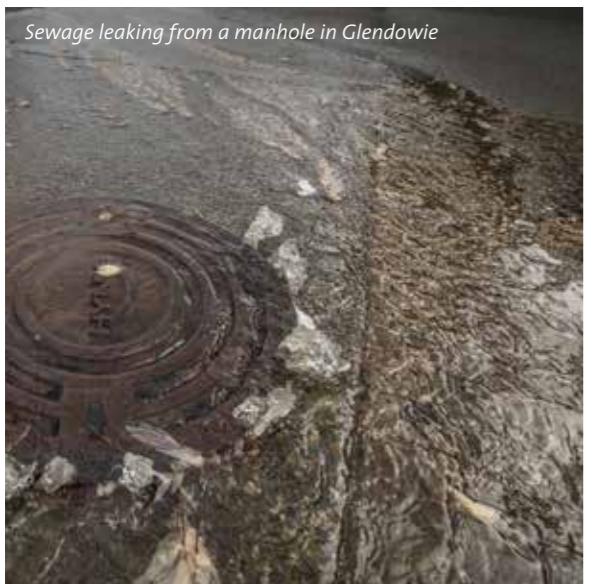
\*Selected responses. See main report for full review.

## CONSTRAINTS

**Despite investment and interventions to address environmental issues, gains are often off-set by increasing pressure and use.** Other barriers to success identified in the report include:

### ■ Technical complexity

Waiting, and contesting evidence, can lead to long delays in taking action. Accumulated high sediment, nutrient and heavy metal discharges create difficult legacy issues.



### ■ Commercial imperatives

National and regional policies promote greater utilisation of agricultural and marine resources and marine space, making protection and enhancement objectives difficult to achieve.

### ■ Legislative conflicts

Contradictions and tensions within and between legislation, including the Fisheries Act and Resources Management Act, make decision making challenging.

### ■ Institutional delays

Development and implementation of regulation can be exceedingly slow.

### ■ Financial limitations

Biodiversity management tends to be underfunded and traded off in national and regional funding decisions. The conservation community is poorly resourced, despite significant wealth generation from common marine resources.

### ■ The lack of an accepted, holistic and integrated plan across agencies, users and mana whenua.

An integrated approach has remained elusive despite the efforts of the Hauraki Gulf Forum over 17 years.

## A CHANGING DYNAMIC FOR IWİ

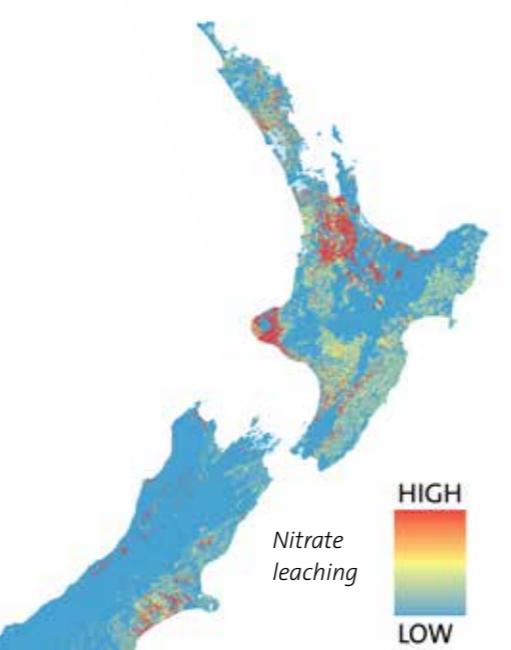
**The governance of the Gulf is changing. Mana and authority is being restored, but at the same time the mauri (or life supporting capacity) of many of the Gulf's resources has been diminished.**

There have been significant developments for mana whenua around Tīkapa Moana/ Te Moananui o Toi since 2014 with at least 13 treaty settlements being progressed, several through to legislation. Applications have also been lodged for protected customary rights and title.

A growing Māori economy based on fishing, aquaculture, farming and tourism assets builds opportunities for self determination (kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga, rangitiratanga).



Many iwi are investing in ecological restoration utilising mauri and cultural indicators as models for success. These are expected to increasingly inform future state of the environment assessments.



Freediving at Arid Island

## SUCCESS STORIES

### Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari

Recommendations within the Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari marine spatial plan demonstrate that diverse stakeholders can coalesce around a vision and plan for action.

Some recommendations are big moves that would transition the way the Gulf is fished, enabling recovery of stocks and habitats. New marine protected areas and aquaculture zones are identified, alongside mechanisms to recognise mana whenua rights and aspirations. The plan, three years in the making, binds users into higher operating standards around the Gulf. Although yet to be fully considered or endorsed by all parties, it offers significant potential to guide future management.

### Partnership with mana whenua

Te Hauturu-o-Toi Little Barrier Island Nature Reserve Management Plan 2017 was co-approved by Ngāti Manuhiri (along with the Auckland Conservation Board) enabling co-governance of the island under the Ngāti Manuhiri Treaty settlement legislation, a first for this type of planning arrangement.

### Collaborations with users

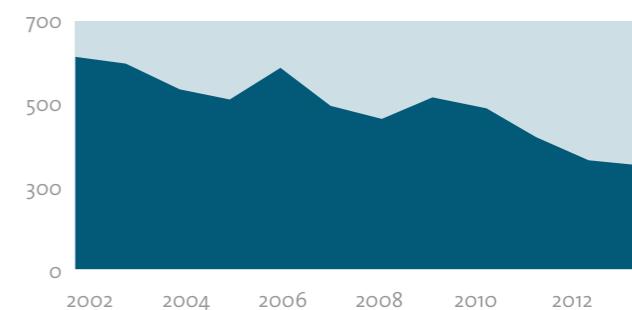
A 2013 transit protocol to encourage safe passage around whales has achieved almost universal adoption, with large vessel speed now close to the target 10 knots. A public pledge to ensure black petrels and seabirds thrive alongside fishing was made in 2014.

### Philanthropic support

In 2016 the Gulf Innovation Fund Together Together (GIFT), a new \$5 million investment, was announced by Foundation North.

### Contribution from communities

Ahuahu/ Great Mercury Island became the 47th island in the Gulf to be mammalian pest free in 2016, the result of a generous partnership between the island owners and Department of Conservation. Biodiversity gains on islands throughout the Gulf are backed by many conservation volunteers, community trusts and supportive iwi.



Black petrel/taiko captured in the small vessel bottom longline fishery



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR/ DEPUTY CHAIR

Tena koe e te rangatira

The 2017 State of our Gulf assessment shows that sufficient knowledge about the Gulf has now been assembled and verified to draw robust conclusions about some significant issues, sufficient to justify prescriptive programmes of action, including statutory and regulatory initiatives, to restore the outstanding life-supporting capacity of the Gulf.

The report confirms simple truths about the gulf, its waters, islands, catchments and life:

- Everything is connected, whether by ecosystem links or kinship.
- The gulf, islands and catchments are diverse, bountiful and rich ecosystems and habitats that are naturally robust and productive.
- Almost all areas are naturally degraded and damaged by human activity, yet they retain resilience, and are demonstrably restorable.

All Forum parties – Crown, Local Government and Iwi – have important roles to play in implementing actions, individually and collectively.

All have work plans that contribute to the well-being of the Gulf: however, we have yet to achieve the ideal of meaningful cross-agency integrated management.

Achieving the Act's ambition of integrated management responses will require the understanding and support of many.

We have witnessed a willingness for change across all sectors of society – treaty partners, decision makers, volunteers, community groups, fishers, farmers and developers - and the potentials to make it happen.

We draw these matters to the attention of the Minister of Conservation and other responsible ministers and seek support for a renewed, integrated programme of action across government agencies and partners.



The full report on the State of our Gulf 2017 is available from [haurakigulfforum.org.nz](http://haurakigulfforum.org.nz) or request a hard copy from [info@haurakigulfforum.org.nz](mailto:info@haurakigulfforum.org.nz)



Mayor John Tregidga and Liane Ngamane  
Chair and Deputy Chair, Hauraki Gulf Forum  
**November 2017**

*Under the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000 the Hauraki Gulf Forum is required to prepare and publish, once every three years, a report on the state of the environment in the Hauraki Gulf, including information on progress towards integrated management and responses to prioritised strategic issues.*

*The Hauraki Gulf Forum is a statutory body charged with the promotion and facilitation of integrated management and the protection and enhancement of the Hauraki Gulf. The Forum has representation on behalf of the Ministers for Conservation, Primary Industries and Māori Affairs, elected representatives from Auckland Council (including the Great Barrier and Waiheke local boards), Waikato Regional Council, and the Waikato, Hauraki, Thames Coromandel and Matamata Piako district councils, plus six representatives of the tāngata whenua of the Hauraki Gulf and its islands.*

[www.haurakigulfforum.org.nz](http://www.haurakigulfforum.org.nz)

Photography Darryl Torckler [www.darryltorckler.co.nz](http://www.darryltorckler.co.nz), Geoff Reid and Shaun Lee



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