

SEA CHANGE SUMMARY

7 December 2016

Sea Change has been a collaborative process to devise a marine spatial plan for the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, which covers about 1.2 million ha of ocean stretching from Waihi to Mangawhai via the 12 mile limit east of Great Barrier Island.

The Stakeholder Working Group, including Iwi representatives, worked with the following partner agencies: Auckland Council, Waikato Regional Council, MPI and DoC. The bulk of the scientific advice was obtained from NIWA and some from the Auckland Council and Waikato Regional Council. The Sea Change vision is primarily one of restoring abundance in the Park for all of its communities. A number of initiatives were developed to restore fish stocks and protect habitats. The major ones are listed here:

- 1. Fisheries:** Establish the Park as a separate fisheries and quota management area. Review fish stocks and set appropriate catch limits. Introduce recreational fisheries legislation to establish regulations that apply specifically to the Park. Phased withdrawal of benthic impact fishing methods out of the Park by 2025, including trawling, Danish seining and dredging (both commercial and recreational) with commercial taking of scallops to be allowed by SCUBA or other seabed friendly methods. Urgent reviews of rock lobster stocks and management actions to rebuild stocks. Management measures to reduce kina numbers. Addressing sequential depletion of Hāpuku with the establishment of MPA's and reviewing the TAC and regulatory frame work. Urgent review into the effects of purse seining on the ecosystem health and biodiversity of the Park. Seasonal closures for intertidal species. Encourage higher values from fish extraction. Reduce mortality of sub legal fish. Reporting of catch by commercial charter operators as well as a measure of observer days focused on seabird interactions. 100% camera or in person observation on long line, trawling and all seiners operating in the Park. Support for initiatives such as mussel bed restoration.
- 2. Aquaculture:** Encourage environmentally responsible aquaculture to support the local economies. This will create further angling opportunities. Thirteen new areas identified that are suitable for future aquaculture development, including mussels, oysters and finfish. These areas are scattered from the Firth of Thames in the west to Castle Rock in the east. Allow for other forms of aquaculture in the future, such as seaweed, scallops or rock lobster.
- 3. Marine Protected Areas:** Up to 15 MPA's are recommended with 4 basic types. Type 1, being a no take area (other than customary take on a case by case basis by special permit). Type 2 being a benthic protection area, restricting all fishing methods that impact on the benthos. Special Management Areas (SMA) where only restricted recreational fishing is allowed and commercial fishing banned altogether, one objective being to explore highest possible economic return per fish. Ahu Moana areas stretching 1 km offshore from coast lines and islands that are jointly managed by local Iwi hapu and local communities. Recreational and commercial fishing will be allowed in these areas unless decided differently by the local governance committees. The SWG

could not agree on all proposed MPA's and in some instances 2 options are offered with decision making referred to local communities and mana whenua

4. **Water Quality:** The marine spatial plan also involves the catchments feeding into the waters of the Park. Sedimentation was fingered as having a major impact on water quality and a number of objectives were set to reduce sedimentation to 2mm per annum above baseline, base line being the original state of the land prior to large scale land clearing. Agricultural nutrients were not shown to have a major negative impact on water quality and a “monitor and hold” regime was recommended. Nutrient levels in the Waihou and Piako rivers have been steady to slightly declining in the last 15 years. It is also likely that the statutory “clean rivers” processes will put additional pressure on nitrogen use as the fresh water bodies don't tolerate nutrients as well as the marine environment. Reductions in pathogens and contaminants are also promoted by the plan.
5. **Governance:** It is recommended that a review of the governance of the Park takes place stressing not only the mandatory co-governance arrangements of the day, but also community participation. The governing body would have a prominent role to play in the implementation of the plan and making recommendations to MPI and DoC and MfE among its many functions.

The marine spatial plan is a package born from collaboration and compromise and as such should be implemented without cherry picking, although a myriad of political interests may create pressure to do just that. All in all if the plan gets fully implemented there will be a lot more fish to catch for everybody. We see it however as a first step on the road towards a Hauraki Gulf Marine Park that exists for the full enjoyment of the public. With fish stocks rebounding and Ministerial discretion regards allocation of yield we ought to see ample fish available to achieve both abundance and public catch properly allowed for thus enabling people to provide for their wellbeing.

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