

Date: 12 August 2021

To: The Hauraki Gulf Forum

Discussion document to be tabled with the Hauraki Gulf Forum

From: Tony Orton representing specific charters operators, related companies and influencers within the Hauraki Gulf Marine park area.

My name is Tony Orton. I am a professional International fishing guide and lodge owner, and I am representing progressive and modern thinking charter operators and related companies (See list below) that use the greater Hauraki Gulf, as well as myself and most importantly, my wife and children. I have made a living from the ocean for over 20 years and am very proud to own a sustainable charter operation that fishes the Mokohinau Islands on a regular basis and International guiding company.

I feel duty bound to let you know how the charter fleet and their customers feel about the Revitalising the Gulf proposals. We reject the plan.

The greater Hauraki Gulf is a treasure and every time we are on the water we are impressed by the effect the environment has on our customers' wellness and mental state. There is something very special about the Gulf, the fish, the bird life and salt air. It is worth protecting for the generations to come.

I read the Revitalising the Gulf document with much anticipation. Sadly, it is a nail in the coffin for many enterprises that utilise the Gulf, particularly for people looking for a special fishing adventure or the chance to take home fresh fish for dinner.

Put plainly, the marine protection proposals are not acceptable in the absence of any meaningful effort to curb destructive commercial fishing pressure. There are some fundamental issues that need to be looked at and fixed before we can move forward.

1. It is farcical for the government to suggest that bottom trawling can continue in the Gulf, in some unspecified 'trawl corridors' when bottom trawling is already recognised as a destructive fishing technique that destroys the seabed, the 3-D organisms that provide shelter and food for a myriad of species.
2. It is unfathomable to consider banning recreational scallop dredging yet allowing commercial fishers to drag the sea-life from the Gulf using the Victorian Box Dredge. The science reports clearly show us that scallops only make up 26% of the catch by volume. As the scallop beds decline we can only expect that percentage to

reduce further.

3. All destructive, mobile bottom fishing techniques need to be taken out of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park including bottom trawling, scallop dredging (both commercial and recreational), and both Danish and purse seining methods.
4. We need to put more emphasis on high value, commercial, line caught fish which is low impact environmentally, reducing other methods that damage the seafloor and benthic environment.
5. **Lack of insight to sustainable tourism opportunities including whale /dolphin watching and charter fishing.**
 1. Under the Government plan world class fisheries like the Mokohinau and Alderman Islands would be locked up and lost forever. Visiting anglers, both domestic and overseas, come to these bucket list fishing destinations targeting kingfish and snapper, putting huge amounts of money into local economies via charter boats, accommodation, and food providers. These world class fisheries could be lost forever under the current proposed plan, yet with simple management they could remain sustainable forever.
 2. There are many charter operators providing sustainable fishing options that are working with bag limits well below the official limits. As a group (myself included) we are bringing in millions of dollars into New Zealand's economy and supporting local communities at the same time. On average, vessels are getting \$200-\$400 per kilo of whole fish after you convert the price of accommodation, hire cars, food, restaurants, charter costs, flights etc to come and fish in New Zealand.
 3. For a lot of these charter operators over 60% of their annual business came from overseas pre-COVID. Locking up areas like the Mokohinau and Alderman Islands will see a massive demise in tourism fishing and affect local communities.

4. The decimation of schools of bait by industrial bulk harvesting including methods like purse and Danish seining leaves the whales, dolphins and associated seabird populations vulnerable and threatened and ultimately will see the collapse of whale watching and related tourism operations.
5. If you look over the current plan for revitalising the Hauraki Gulf you will see on Page 9 on the “Seachange at a glance doc” it has a very nice little bullet point reflecting the aims of Sea Change **“Investment and jobs, and local communities supported, through healthy, reputable and high-value products”**.
 1. Yet another example of the bias that pervades this document. **It's all about 'products'**.
 2. A balanced Economic Impact Assessment will study the potential of a 'revitalised' Marine Park earning a bucket list reputation for anglers worldwide - limited only by our imagination. Real value to be had from each and every kilogram of fish taken by removed under Special Management Area conditions.

6. Displacement of fishing effort.

1. Large closures of popular fishing areas within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Plan means there will be a massive amount of recreational and commercial fishing pressure that will have to shift into the nearby Bream Bay or Bay of Plenty areas and beyond. This will impact on the viability of the fisheries in those areas.

7. Marine mammals and birds and their food source. The food chain is being decimated by purse seining. This method needs to be eliminated from the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park and areas to Bream Head.

1. Eliminating purse seining and destructive commercial fishing techniques will help restore bait supplies in the Gulf to see levels our marine mammals can enjoy.
2. In the last two years we have been seeing more whales in the outer edges of the Gulf looking for food. Work ups in the inner Gulf are getting smaller and not as concentrated which is a true sign bait schools are being depleted. The scary thing is these whales are now spending more time out of the (reduced speed) shipping areas that were designed to stop whales being hit by ships.

3. Whales and dolphins should have priority over commercial plundering of bait supplies.

8. Need for broader fisheries management.

1. The area between the Mokohinau Island and Bream Head including the Hen and Chicken Islands, Bream Bay, and Te Arai is a critical area for bait and fish species moving in and out of the Hauraki Gulf. These critical pathways also need protection and effective fisheries management, including commercial catch limit reductions, recreational controls and benthic protection from damaging fishing methods, including purse seining, danish seining, bottom trawling, and scallop dredging.

9. Unrealised potential lost for little gain. (Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater)

As a professional fishing guide with over 20 years experience I have been fortunate to escort over 400 New Zealanders on more than 50 seven day adventures to some of the most famous and spectacular fishing destinations in the world. Please, let me assure you that there is nothing to compare with the Mokohinau and Alderman archipelagos. The potential to develop truly world class 'bucket list' destination status under Special Management Area conditions - minimal extraction, maximum economy - has not been assessed or quantified. It is unthinkable to lock up these remarkable destinations without resourcing a thorough Economic Impact Assessment of this potential.

Fisheries New Zealand often claim that New Zealand's quota management system is world leading but we find ourselves, after a decade of planning, with some major issues with our marine environment that needs to be addressed. Fish depletion, land run-off, and the ongoing use of destructive fishing techniques are all issues that need to be fixed.

The Government's Revitalising the Gulf plan fails at the first step. It's time for a change!

We look to you, the Hauraki Gulf Forum, to reject the plan and instead make meaningful changes to meet the purpose of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, which is -

To protect in perpetuity and for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the people and communities of the Gulf and New Zealand, the natural and historic resources of the Park including scenery, ecological systems, or natural features that are so beautiful, unique, or scientifically important to be of national significance, for their intrinsic worth...to sustain the life-supporting capacity of the soil, air, water, and ecosystems of the Gulf in the Park.

A big ask for the Forum, but a challenge I hope you will take on in the interests of all the children of the Gulf.

Thanks for your time. I have tabled my document for inclusion in the Forum Documents.

Charter fleet and influencers who support this statement and reject the Revitalising the Gulf plan.

Agreed by:

Tony Orton - Owner, Offshore Adventures

Bea Bagnall - Owner, Offshore Adventures

Jack Lucas - Skipper, Private fishing Guide Hauraki Gulf

John Donald - Owner, Wave Dancer charters and Catch Fishing tackle

Aaron Covacich - Skipper, Bounty-hunter Charters

Grant Bittle - Owner, Catch Fishing

Simon Brady - Owner, Ultimate Charters

Michael Trail - Skipper and Fishing Guide, Ultimate Charters

Craig Hoskins - Skipper and Fishing Guide, Ultimate Charters

Mike Lease - Fishmeister Charters

Laurie Powell - Hooked Up Charters

Jake Brebner - Thor Charters

Josh Schiphist - Owner, Smart Marine

Phil Appleyard - Owner, Big Fish Bait & Tackle Co

Bruce O'Brien - Owner, Epic Adventures

Chase Wotten-Hunt - Skipper, Epic Adventures

Owen Wills - Skipper, Epic Adventures

Mal Williams - Skipper and Fishing Guide, Ultimate Charters, Director of Bounty Hunter Fishing Show.

Panapa Paniora - Panapa Charters

Paul Senior - Charter Skipper and Owner, Ocean Angler

George Bourke - Skipper/Owner Hauraki Express

Peter Bourke - Owner Hauraki Express

Stuart Thomas - Skipper, Hauraki Express

Nick Jones - Skipper, Hauraki Express

Ben Starns - Fisherman

Ben Brown - Owner, Built to Fish TV

Scott Malcon - Fisherman

Daniel de Jong - Fishing Guide and personality

Adam Clancey - Owner, Fishy Business TV Show

Luke Davis - Fishing Guide & Yeehaa Tackle Store

Tony Wood - Fisherman

Steve Morgan - Fisherman

Chris O'Neil - Topcatch

Devon Horgan - Fisherman

Scott Lloyd-Jones - Owner Nautilus Charters

Wayne Downer - Fishing Brand Ambassador

Michael Knight - Owner, OTI Lures

Ryan Churches - Skipper and Fishing Guide, Epic Adventures

Mike Graham - Salty's Marine Ltd t/a Fish City Albany

Kevin & Haley McCarthy - Charter operators Z-Pier, Westhaven

Melanie Olsen and Ian Douglas - Directors Seahawk Charters