

22 July 2022

By Email: HealthyEnvironments@waikatoregion.govt.nz

Waikato Regional Council Project team

Dear Sir/Madam,

WAIKATO REGIONAL COASTAL PLAN REVIEW – FURTHER MARINE BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION OPTIONS

Introduction

1. This feedback on the Waikato Regional Coastal Plan (**WRCP**) review and Policy Paper: Further Marine Biodiversity Protection Options is provided on behalf of the following organisations:
 - (a) The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council Inc (**NZSFC**);
 - (b) The Raglan Sport Fishing Club;
 - (c) The Matarangi Boat & Fishing Club;
 - (d) The Mercury Bay Game Fishing Club;
 - (e) The Waikato Sport Fishing Club;
 - (f) The Whangamata Ocean Sports Club;
 - (g) The Tairua-Pauanui Sports Fishing Club;
 - (h) The Mt Maunganui Sportfishing Club;
 - (i) The Taupo Fishing Club;
 - (j) The Tauranga Sport Fishing Club;
 - (k) The Kawhia Boating & Angling Club;
 - (l) Te Aroha Angling Club (together “**the Clubs**”).
2. This feedback addresses the following matters:
 - (a) Background to the Clubs and NZSFC (together “**the Submitters**”);
 - (b) Proposed policies – Areas vulnerable to disturbance activities;
 - (c) Proposed rule options – Prohibiting disturbance activities or the taking of plants and animals;
 - (d) What areas may be identified as Ecologically Significant Marine Areas.

Background to the Clubs and NZSFC

3. The [New Zealand Sport Fishing Council](#) is a recognised national sports organisation with over 36,200 affiliated members from 55 clubs nationwide. The Council has a public outreach arm, [LegaSea](#). The NZSFC participates in science working groups, management planning forums, undertakes research on its own behalf and has developed [FishCare](#), an educational programme to help fishers minimise their impact on the marine environment. LegaSea generates widespread awareness and support for the need to restore abundance and diversity in our inshore marine environment.
4. The Raglan Fishing Club was founded in the year 2000 and currently have 550 members with another 600 anglers in contact who fish the area.
5. The Matarangi Boat & Fishing Club has 104 plus members.
6. The Mercury Bay Game Fishing Club was formed in 1947 and has 3038 members. It represents a large proportion of fishers, many locals and seasonal visitors to the Coromandel Peninsula.
7. The Waikato Sport Fishing Club, founded 1988, currently has 151 members who fish all points from Kawhia on the west coast to Homunga Bay, Coromandel.
8. The Whangamata Ocean Sports Club is located on the southeast coast of the Coromandel Peninsula. This club dates back to 1958 (previously being Whangamata Gamefishing & Boating Clubs) and has a current membership of 7098. This club's members are active in numerous forms of ocean sports, including, but not limited to; fishing, diving, boating, surfing, kayaking, water skiing, sailing, waka-ama, white-baiting.
9. The Tairua-Pauanui Sports Fishing Club, has 1534 members, many of who fish and all who are concerned with continuing access to our coastal and marine environment.
10. The Mt Maunganui Sportfishing Club has 1593 members fishing the Bay of Plenty and Coromandel.
11. The Taupo Fishing Club joined the NZSFC in 1994. The Club currently has 125 members who saltwater fish on the east and west coasts of the North Island, and enjoy freshwater fishing.
12. The Tauranga Sport Fishing Club is a founding club of the NZSFC, having joined in 1957. The Club has 2,329 members fishing mainly in Bay of Plenty and Coromandel waters.
13. The Kawhia Boating & Angling Club joined the NZSFC in 1992 and currently has 455 members.
14. The Te Aroha Angling Club has 56 members fishing the waters around the Firth of Thames, Coromandel and Bay of Plenty.
15. It is a known fact that less than 10% of recreational fishers belong to any fishing/boating club, so the Clubs and NZSFC seek to undertake the responsibility of representing the interests of all fishers.
16. Recreational fishing is by far the most common activity hosted in the marine environment; it puts food on the table and brings people to coastal towns to relax and

enjoy the great outdoors. More than half of the nation's population has easy access to both the east and west coasts of the Waikato Regional area.

17. Recreational fishing pumps tens of millions of dollars into the regional economy, supporting hundreds of jobs. The significant contribution of recreational fishing to the social, cultural, and economic wellbeing of the people and communities of the Waikato Region must be recognised in the review of the WRCP.

Policy ECO-P10 Avoiding activities that disturb vulnerable ecologically significant areas

18. The Waikato Regional Council advises in their [Marine Biodiversity Protection Options Paper](#) they are considering “whether the new coastal plan should go further with rules that require activities that disturb the foreshore and seabed to be avoided in areas identified as having significant biodiversity value in the coastal marine area”. Also, policy/rules may or may not be appropriate within Ecologically Significant Marine Areas.
19. The Submitters agree that the foreshore and seabed need to be protected from gross disturbance however, as long as humans exist there is likely to be some disturbance.
20. From our experience and the available literature, over the long term one of the greatest risks to the nearshore marine environment is the run-off due to poorly managed land-based activities. This is core business for Regional Councils and Territorial Authorities.
21. It will take considerable time to define and agree on ‘ecologically significant areas’ and these may become redundant if the Resource Management Act 1991 is repealed and replaced. Given the uncertain future of the Resource Management Act and the 10-year life of a Coastal Plan it is more appropriate to use Fisheries Act tools to address fisheries based issues.
22. Section 11 of the Fisheries Act empowers the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries to control catch limits, size, sex, biological state of any fish, aquatic life or seaweed, areas able to be fished, permitted fishing methods and seasons. These are wide ranging powers that, if applied appropriately, could not just protect the nearshore environment, but enhance it for the benefit of future generations.
23. We submit that any controls applying to the marine environment ought to be applied under the provisions in the Fisheries Act 1996.
24. The NZSFC has collaborated with mana whenua of the Hauraki Gulf to develop an Ahu Moana Policy which we will be promoting as a new section in the Fisheries Act. Ahu Moana is localised marine management by mana whenua and the community. In general, the Ahu Moana zone would extend from Mean High Water Springs (the high tide mark) out to one kilometre offshore. In some places it could extend further to encompass significant fisheries or places.
25. The Ahu Moana Policy will be presented for ratification from the NZSFC's 55 clubs including those joined in this submission, at the Annual General Meeting in September 2022.
26. We submit that a community based solution such as Ahu Moana has more potential for success due to local support and monitoring than any area identified as ‘significant’ on an apparently arbitrary basis.

Method ECO-M1 Identifying vulnerable ecological areas in Schedule 7c

27. Asking people to identify areas of importance by using an interactive online map is fraught because it raises peoples' expectations that 'their' area may be chosen to be protected alongside the numerous areas already identified by the WRC as cultural and historic heritage sites.
28. It is inevitable that familiar sites along the coastal margin and in nearshore waters will be nominated as vulnerable areas requiring protection. There will be a myriad of reasons why people will nominate their favourite or familiar places as being ecologically vulnerable. Not all of those reasons will be valid nor fishing related yet this process represents a threat to our membership and the wider public who derive social, cultural and personal wellbeing from being able to gather kaimoana from the intertidal zone, fish from the shore, in local waters or around the many islands.
29. We submit that existing access for fishing purposes must be maintained.

Proposed rule options – Prohibiting disturbance activities or the taking of plants and animals

30. The Submitters have mixed views on the Council's proposition that they will "consider options that may limit commercial and/or recreational activities such as fishing and kaimoana gathering". Our views on the Council's four potential options to be considered to achieve this rule are set out below:
 - (a) Option 1 – Leave to other legislation (no new rules).
Supported. As the above, fishing activity can and must be regulated by provisions in the Fisheries Act 1996.
 - (b) Option 2 – Prohibit disturbance of the seabed or foreshore in specifically identified and mapped areas.
Partial support for the prohibition of mobile, bottom contact fishing methods such as trawling and dredging that disturb the seabed. The Submitters' preference is that these outcomes are achieved under the Fisheries Act 1996. **We also support** the prohibition within the Territorial Sea of purse seining for forage species as these are significant in the food web, supporting vulnerable and threatened seabirds. Controls of this nature cannot be achieved using the RMA, which again reinforces the need for Fisheries Act based solutions.
 - (c) Option 3 – Prohibit the taking of all plants and animals in specifically identified and mapped areas. Similar to a no take marine reserve.
Oppose. Displacement of fishing effort from a closed area poses an unacceptable risk to the remaining open areas. If catches need to be reduced then the Fisheries Act tools must be applied.
 - (d) Option 4 – Prohibit or allow some activities in specifically identified and mapped areas.
Support continued ability for vessels to anchor in safe areas and the removal of identified invasive or introduced species.

Conclusion

31. The Clubs and NZSFC are grateful for this opportunity to provide feedback on the policy directions to the WRCP review. The Clubs and NZSFC are happy to discuss any aspect of this feedback.

Yours faithfully

Bob Gutsell

New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and Clubs