

Hauraki Gulf Trawl Corridor proposal - Talking Points

By the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council

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What is the consultation about?

Fisheries New Zealand has presented [four options for creating trawl corridors](#) in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. None of the options completely ban mobile, bottom contact fishing such as bottom trawling, Danish seining and dredging. The lack of intent to transition away from destructive fishing methods to less impactful techniques is contrary to widespread public opinion and the Hauraki Gulf Forum's goals.

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council has developed an alternative - **Option Zero** - the only option that will achieve the goal "to improve the health and mauri of the Gulf" by taking "more integrated and ecosystem focussed approaches to managing both fisheries, and the marine ecosystem that supports them".

Proposed Options

- **Option Zero:** Close 100% of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park shallower than 200m to Danish seine and bottom trawling. No bottom fishing access zones.
- **Option One:** Close 74% of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park shallower than 200m to Danish seine and 77.1% to bottom trawling. Establish 6 bottom fishing access zones.
- **Option Two:** Close 79.4% of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park shallower than 200m to Danish seine and 82.4% to bottom trawling. Establish 5 bottom fishing access zones.
- **Option Three:** Close 86.6% of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park shallower than 200m to Danish seine and 88.5% to bottom trawling. Establish 4 bottom fishing access zones.
- **Option Four:** Close 87.3% of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park shallower than 200m to Danish seine and 89.2% to bottom trawling. Establish 4 bottom fishing access zones with 1 area Danish seine only.

Please see the Fisheries New Zealand [map](#) depicting Options One to Four.

Consultation

Public submissions are due with Fisheries New Zealand by **6 November**.

We urge all individuals, organisations, clubs and interest groups to make a submission, expressing your views on how these proposals will affect you, and how you want the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park to be managed in the future. This is our opportunity to advocate for the restoration of the abundance and diversity of marine life in the Hauraki Gulf.

We have put together an [easy submission form](#) in collaboration with the [Hauraki Gulf Alliance](#) where you can customise your submission.

DISCUSSION

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council, LegaSea and 110 organisations formed the Hauraki Gulf Alliance to collectively advocate for no more bottom contact fishing in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

The health of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park needs to be prioritised.

Establishing the proposed trawl corridors where trawling, Danish seining and dredging can continue will not mitigate the threats to biodiversity nor restore abundance in our coastal waters.

To achieve Fisheries New Zealand's objective for "more integrated and ecosystem focused approaches to managing both fisheries and the marine ecosystem that supports them" we advocate the Minister acts in a precautionary manner and makes the following decisions -

1. **All bottom trawling, Danish seining, and dredging must be banned** from the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.
2. Designate the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park a Type 2 MPA - a Seafloor Protection Area, to only permit the use of low impact fishing techniques such as longlining and trapping (potting).
3. Designate the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park as a separate Fisheries Management Area to enable the Minister to set species-specific catch limits to:

- a. Rebuild the abundance of fish stocks to a minimum of 50 percent of their estimated, unfished biomass ([B50](#));
- b. Regulate how much fish is removed from Park waters; and
- c. Avoid displacement of existing fishing effort into East Northland, Coromandel and Bay of Plenty.

Why should you be concerned?

1. 100% of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park needs protection from mobile, bottom contact fishing methods.

- a. Bottom trawling, Danish seine, and dredging are currently permitted in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.
- b. Current proposals only relate to limiting bottom trawling and Danish seining to trawl corridors.
- c. Mobile, bottom contact fishing destroys seabed organisms and habitat that are crucial for sustaining marine life.
- d. If this process cannot protect Marine Park waters from destructive fishing methods then there is slim hope of banning these methods from inshore waters around the remainder of the country.

2. Sustained intensification of trawl effort.

- a. Fishing effort will be concentrated in the 'trawl corridors', intensifying the damaging effects on the benthic environment in those areas.

3. Displacement of trawling fishing effort.

- a. The implementation of trawl corridors will impact on people living outside of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, as existing fishing effort will be displaced into East Northland, Coromandel and the Bay of Plenty.
- b. The Hauraki Gulf needs to be designated as a separate fisheries management area to avoid displacement of fishing effort.

4. Continuous decline in marine ecosystem health.

- a. The FNZ proposals are prejudiced towards maintaining the status quo. They do not propose meaningful management changes to address long-term depletion and degradation of the Gulf.
- b. Danish seining, dredging and trawling are non-selective fishing methods that are associated with high rates of mortality - delivering low value catch while damaging the organisms/habitats that are left on the seafloor.

5. No assessment of risks.

- a. Officials have not assessed the effects of more intensive fishing in the trawl corridors proposed in Options 1 to 4.
- b. Officials have not adequately highlighted the Minister's statutory obligation to apply a precautionary approach.
 - i. The Fisheries Act empowers the Minister to impose restrictions when data is absent, incomplete or inadequate, enabling a ban on destructive fishing methods within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

6. Public opposition.

- a. Officials are ignoring widespread opposition to their plans. 84%¹ of people living around the Hauraki Gulf want bottom trawling banned.
- b. The public is increasingly concerned with the ongoing mismanagement of Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, highlighting the need for action.

7. Inevitable spread of invasive species.

- a. The invasive seaweed *Caulerpa* has been detected in multiple locations within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park (Aotea Great Barrier Island, Kawau Island, Ahuahu Great Mercury Island, and Waiheke Island).
- b. *Caulerpa* can be spread by a frond breaking off and landing in another location. Bottom trawling and Danish seining (and dredging²) pose risks to further spreading this invasive weed.
- c. Invasive species such as *caulerpa* is a much stronger threat in degraded environments. *Caulerpa* is a high biosecurity threat given the degraded state of the Gulf.

8. Misrepresentation of proposal.

- a. Fisheries NZ's reference to 'bottom fishing access zones' is a deliberate mischaracterisation of what is commonly understood as 'trawl corridors'.
- b. Dropping any reference to '**mobile** bottom fishing' removes the objectionable part, yet it is **mobile** bottom fishing that has caused the destruction and destroyed the productivity of the Hauraki Gulf.
- c. FNZ officials deliberately distracting submitters by using more benign terms during this consultation process is not acting in good faith.

¹ [Horizon Research. "Hauraki Gulf Survey," Hauraki Gulf Forum. October 2021.](#)

² While the harvesting of scallops in the Hauraki Gulf is currently not permitted, and recreational dredging is not permitted, commercial dredging has not been banned from the Gulf.