

Hauraki Gulf Marine Protection Bill 2023

November 2023

In 2023 the Government consulted on the Hauraki Gulf Tiikapa Moana Marine Protection Bill. The Bill seeks to address declining biodiversity and fish abundance in the Gulf by creating 19 new marine protected areas (MPAs).

The MPAs include extending two existing marine reserves, creating five seafloor protection areas (allowing low-impact fishing), and 12 high protection areas where only Māori customary fishing will be permitted.

Legasea collaborated with the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council, New Zealand Angling & Casting Association and others, to develop a viable alternative to the proposed MPAs.

The entire Hauraki Gulf Marine Park must be protected from destructive and excessive fishing.

The MPAs will only protect 18% of the Hauraki Gulf. This isn't good enough.

The Bill must be amended to protect 100% of the seabed.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

The Gulf is under pressure from overfishing, destructive fishing methods, and sedimentation. Seabirds are hungry and the scallops beds have collapsed.

Climate change, invasive seaweeds and water contaminants mean seabed organisms are becoming increasingly vulnerable and struggling to survive.

We need to do more to remedy over a century of damage caused by bottom trawling and dredging.

Restoration is needed. A bold solution is required.

THE SOLUTION

In November a comprehensive submission was sent to the Parliamentary Environment Select Committee considering the Bill. To enhance biodiversity we made the following recommendations:

1. Designate the whole Hauraki Gulf as a Type 2 MPA, to only allow low-impact fishing.
2. Make provision for Ahu Moana, a community-driven process to solve local depletion issues.
3. Set more conservative catch limits to enable fish populations to rebuild to more natural levels.

WHAT NEXT?

The Select Committee will consider feedback on the Bill and make their recommendations to Parliament by March 2024. The Bill will either be dismissed, amended or progressed to become law.

We will review the Committee's decision and outcomes from any new legislation.

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