

BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991 (the **Act**)

AND

IN THE MATTER Submissions on the Proposed Waikato Regional Coastal Plan

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF DERYK MELVILLE NIELSEN
ON BEHALF OF TAURANGA SPORT FISHING CLUB INC**

Dated: 17 April 2025

Rowan Ashton
Special Counsel
ashton@brookfields.co.nz
Telephone No. 09 979 2210
P O Box 240
DX CP24134
AUCKLAND

BROOKFIELDS
LAWYERS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 My name is Deryk Nielsen

1.2 I represent the Tauranga Sport Fishing Club, one of five founding member clubs of what is now known as the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (**NZSFC**). The club has been in existence for over 100 years, was formerly based on Mayor Island/Tuhua until it relocated ashore in Tauranga in 1989, and currently has an active membership of over 2700 members. I am a former President of the club, a Life Member, and am the club's representative to NZSFC. I have previously been a Zone delegate for this region and as such, a former Board member of NZSFC.

1.3 We are one of two NZSFC affiliated clubs in Tauranga, (the other being the Mount Maunganui Sport Fishing Club, which has a membership in excess of 1700 members), and one of a number of affiliated clubs on the East Coast of Coromandel, and the western Bay of Plenty. There are further clubs located all around the Bay of Plenty, all of whom would consider the total area part of their fishing chart. There are also other fishing clubs within the area who are not affiliated, but to whom fishing is the core, and who rely on the ability to get out on the coast or ocean to "catch a feed". And then there are the fishermen and woman who do not belong to any club, but to whom fishing is of utmost importance for their physical and mental wellbeing, and who simply rely on it to feed their whanau.

1.4 My evidence addresses:

- (a) The recreational fishing values of the Eastern Waikato Region / Coromandel; and the Bay of Plenty in general;
- (b) Adverse effects on recreational fishing as a result of the significant fishing closures proposed by the Environmental Defence Society (**EDS**).
- (c) The practical consequences of closed areas

2. RECREATIONAL FISHING VALUES OF THE COROMANDEL

2.1 Our club has a defined fishing area of a modified NZ Maritime Chart 54, which runs directly north from Lottin Point, East Cape, and east from the northern tip of the Coromandel Peninsular. As such, a large part of our chart area falls within the proposed areas of restriction.

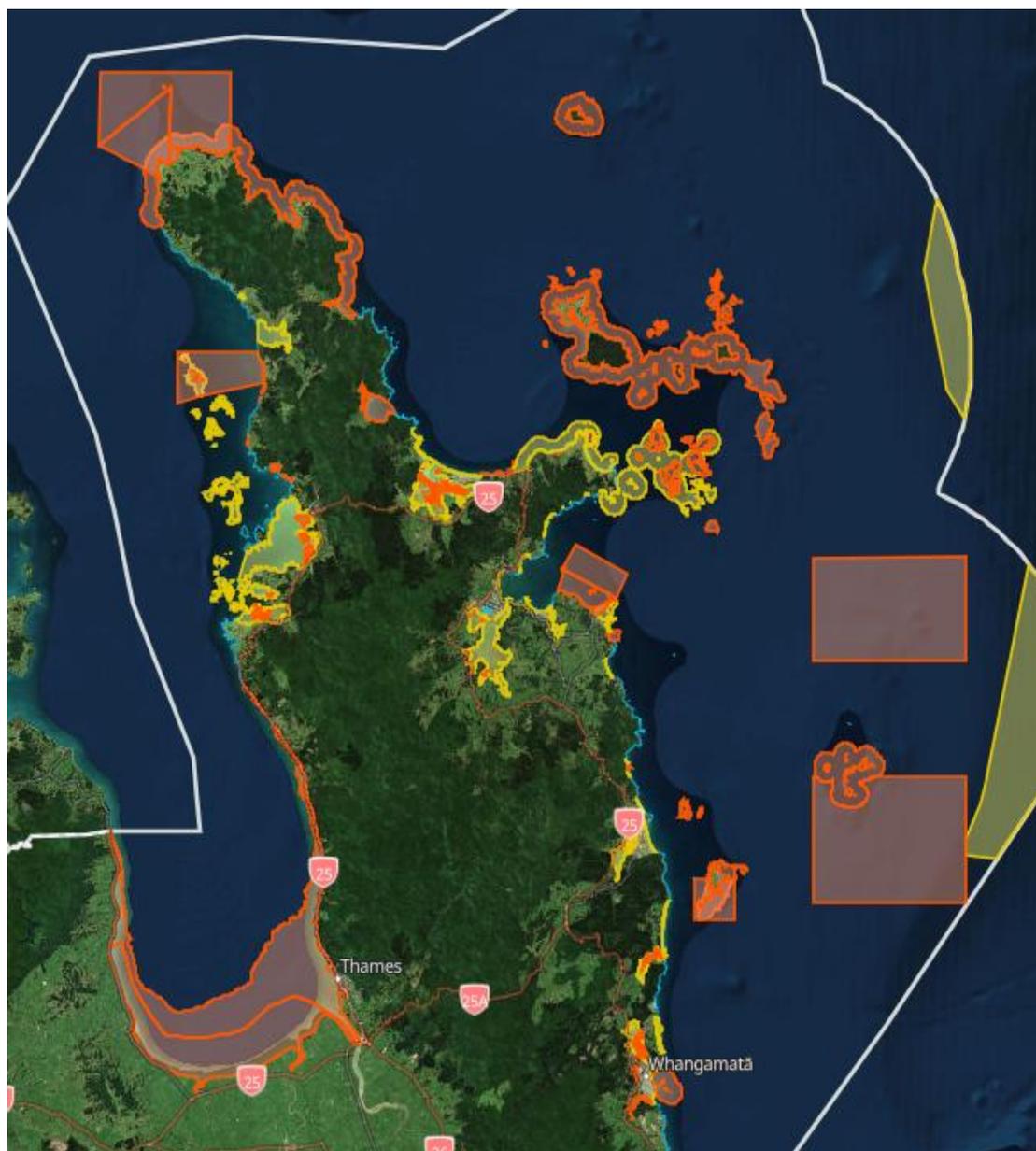
2.2 Sustainable fishing of all forms, from pelagic game fish through to fishing for bottom species such as snapper, tarakihi, wreckfish etc, are part of the ethos of our club. We

actively encourage our membership to only take what they need to feed their whanau and to release what they can. We have a release rate on our game fishing in excess of 60%, sometime as high 85% in our tournaments.

- 2.3 The social, economic and cultural effects on our club (and other clubs) of the proposed restrictions are significant, when areas within it are closed off from all fishing. By extension, those effects flow on to the rest of the local economy of businesses that are connected to or reliant on recreational fishing.

3. EFFECTS ON RECREATIONAL FISHING FROM EDS PROPOSED CLOSURES

- 3.1 We understand that EDS is seeking to make all fishing a prohibited activity in the orange areas below (some of which are existing or proposed Marine Reserves or High Protection Areas):



- 3.2 Included in the exclusion areas proposed, there are most of the structural features of the region, which are not only the areas to which the fish are attracted, but also the safe anchorages that many of our members will use. For example, Slipper Island or the Mercury Islands, the Alderman Islands and so on are a destinations for many of our fleet who choose to stay out on their boats overnight, during which time they will continue to fish for non-migratory species in the safety of the lee of an island. If these areas are made “off-limits” for fishing of any kind, they will no longer be destinations, and thus potentially take the whole area out of contention for the nature of the trip.
- 3.3 There are already protected areas both within the proposed exclusion and to the south and east of the above, as well as in the inner Hauraki Gulf. Already we notice displacement of effort, with fishers being forced either further afield, or fishing in “open” areas where their craft may not be suited, and the risk is greater. This safety aspect must not be ignored. Equally important is the effect of closed areas on the sustainability of remaining open areas, i.e. more concentrated fishing pressure equal less sustainability overall.
- 3.4 Respectfully, EDS have not spent the time canvassing local vested interests and understanding the recreational fishing values that they are proposing to restrict. They have totally ignored the many years of work put in by the various parties who came up with spatial Plan developed by the Hauraki Gulf Working group – a body of varied interests and approaches, including mana whenua, commercial interests, recreational and local body representation. Their recommendations (frustratingly) took many years of discussion, but above all, compromise was the key to reaching an ultimate agreement. The EDS proposal seems to have a singular approach to the issue to the disregard of other stakeholders.

4. THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF CLOSED AREAS

- 4.1 There is already significant resentment by recreational fishers of the destructive bulk harvesting methods used by the commercial sector and the adverse effects of this on the marine environment that are plain for all to see. Allowing them to continue mobile bottom contact fishing and purse seining alongside areas where others cannot fish at all, will only increase that resentment, and ultimately lead to conflict.
- 4.2 Areas of full protection have and will continue to lead to displacement of effort. As stated above, that in turn leads to further pressure on those areas and ultimately further depletion of overall stocks.

4.3 Enforcement of such areas also becomes an issue. There has been no mention of how such enforcement would be carried out, by whom, and at what cost.

5. SUMMARY

5.1 We are extremely concerned by the proposal which has largely ignored the extensive consultation and work put in by Hauraki Gulf Working Group. We do not believe that fully closed areas are practical or workable over large areas. We look forward to the opportunity to address this submission in person. Thank you for your consideration.

Dated 17 April 2025

Deryk Melville Nielsen