

**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

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ROBERT 'BOB' GUTSELL  
ON BEHALF OF NEW ZEALAND SPORT FISH COUNCIL ZONE 6 AFFILIATED CLUBS**

**Dated: 17 April 2025**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 My name is Robert (Bob) John Stephen Gutsell. My evidence is given on behalf of New Zealand Sport Fishing Council Zone 6 affiliated Clubs (Waikato Sportfishing, Raglan Sport Fishing, Kawhia Sport fishing) and Counties Sport Fishing Club.

## **2. EFFECTS ON RECREATIONAL FISHING FROM EDS PROPOSED CLOSURES**

- 2.1 We understand that EDS is seeking to make all fishing a prohibited activity in identified SIBA-A.
- 2.2 On the west coast, SIBA-A areas are largely harbour areas fished by shore based anglers using rod and reel and some degree of set netting. Our members and tangata whenua have a long history of fishing these areas for both sport and sustenance.
- 2.3 EDS have provided no evidence to support why and what would be saved by preventing these fishing methods in these areas.
- 2.4 The areas identified as SIBA within the harbours of the west coast are not rocky reef habitat at risk of kina barrens. These areas may overlap with traditional and cultural whitebait fishing areas. Locations that are known habitats for whitebait spawning already have some degree of spawning habitat protection and management from the Department of Conservation, Regional Council, iwi and community groups. Further controls on fishing will heavily impact our members who harvest whitebait.
- 2.5 Rod and reel or set net fishing has limited impact on these areas as fish are transitory through these areas as the tide ebbs and flows. i.e they are not in residence.
- 2.6 The balance of West Coast reefs highlighted a SIBA-B areas are located in an area which has arguably the highest biomass of snapper in NZ, this was informed by the most recent stock assessment in 2024. Similarly, whilst a full CRA 9 stock assessment has not been completed in recent history, the observed abundance of west coast crayfish populations are also in very good shape. This would strongly suggest that if any kina barrens exist on the west coast there would be either environmental conditions that would be contributing to their prevalence and not a reduction in predatory reef species.
- 2.7 These areas are also not heavily fished, they don't need to be. Anglers looking to catch a feed of snapper don't need to fish reefs, as the snapper are easily found on the sand in anything from 5 metres out to 100 metres off the west coast of the Waikato region.

- 2.8 However, most of fishing on the reefs is for kingfish, done from boats that rarely anchor, using jigs or bait. These reefs are all heavily populated by bronze whaler sharks, so a fishing session for kingfish often results in a few fish being landed before the sharks start eating hooked fish. At that stage anglers move away from the reef and go and do something else as any fish hooked once the sharks have moved in become their dinner! So fishing pressure on these reefs by recreational anglers is far from high.
- 2.9 The reefs don't need to be protected from trawling either, they do that well enough by themselves. Being shallow reefs any attempt to trawl trawl over them will result in snagged nets and destroyed gear.

### **3. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

- 3.1 The fishing controls proposed by the EDS represent an unnecessary broadbrush approach to biodiversity management that are based on conservation stereotypes.
- 3.2 The areas highlighted as SIBA-A and SIBA-B are areas of low but historically important fishing activity. i.e landbased (surfcasting) or for targeting specific species such as kingfish.
- 3.3 Any intention to protect any of these areas requires a lot more effort to unequivocally demonstrate how removing these activities would benefit bio-diversity of the specific Area.
- 3.4 Common stereotypical arguments such as kina barrens being caused by the lack of snapper or crayfish do not stand-up on the west coast where there is an abundance of both species in a range of sizes.
- 3.5 NZSFC has a long history of supporting section 186 closures mātaimai and other customary tools when areas are under threat when requested by Mana whenua. We strongly recommend that any efforts made to protect biodiversity of an area should be made after considering the customary tools which are subject to periodic review as opposed to permanent controls being imposed.
- 3.6 NZSFC and its West Coast clubs do not support any of the proposed controls by EDS.

**Robert 'Bob' Gutsell**

**17 April 2024**