

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 GORDON MCIVOR
ON BEHALF OF MERCURY BAY GAME FISHING CLUB INCORPORATED**

Dated: 17 April 2025

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BROOKFIELDS
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1. INTRODUCTION

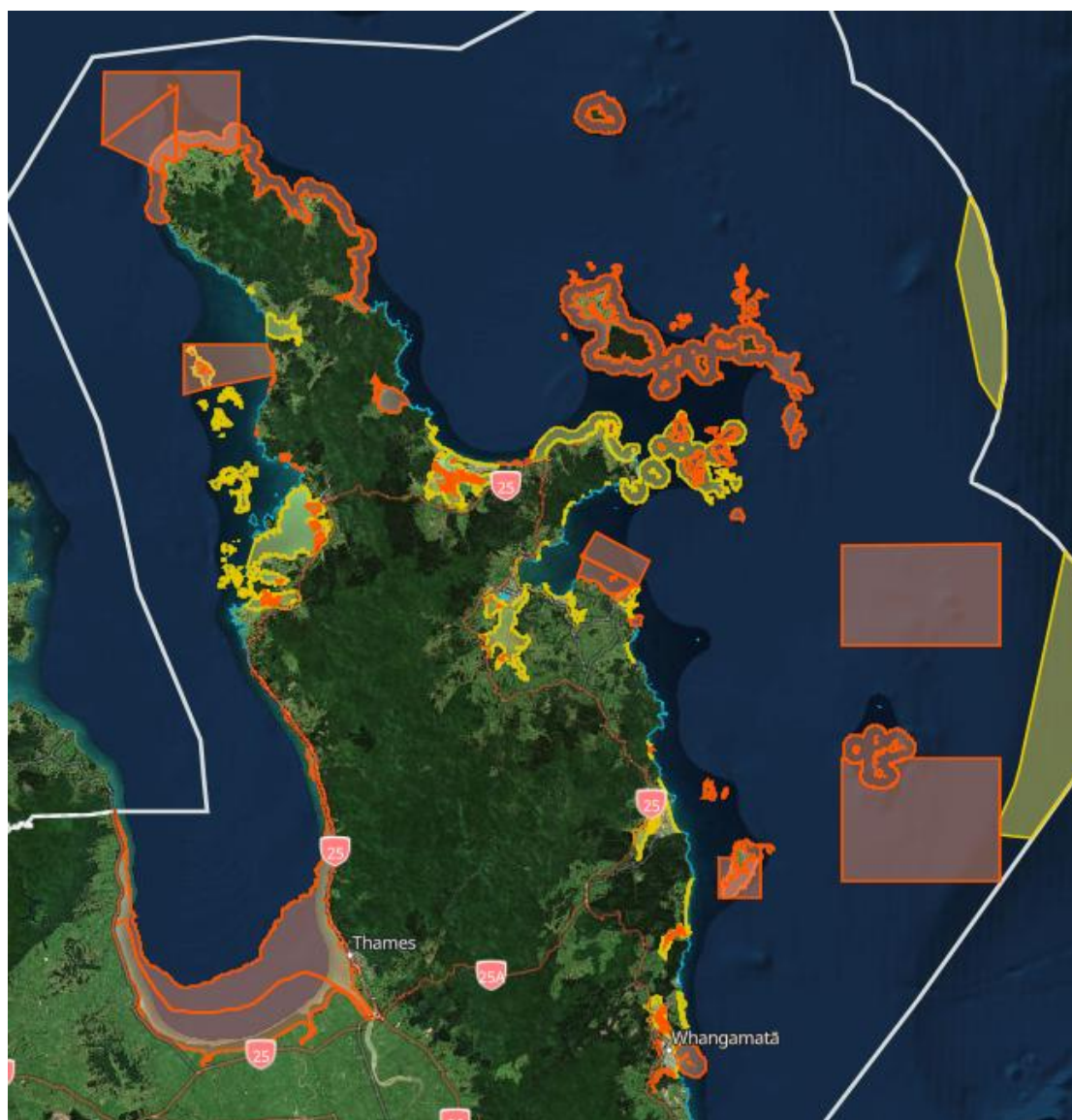
- 1.1 My name is Gordon McIvor, and I am the President of the Mercury Bay Game Fishing Club, based in Whitianga. Our club has a proud history spanning a 100 years, with continuous operation since 1947. We currently have 3,400 members and employ 14 staff. One of our constitution's core objectives is the protection of fish and their food sources.
- 1.2 This statement also represents the views of the Matarangi Boat & Fishing Club Incorporated, located in Matarangi on the east coast of the Coromandel with 193 club members. Matarangi Boat & Fishing Club Inc align themselves with the values and objectives of the Mercury Bay Game Fishing Club.
- 1.3 It also represents the views of the Tairua Pauanui Sports Fishing Club Incorporated, located at 12 The Marine, Tairua, with 1850 members and 8 staff. The Tairua Pauanui Sports Fishing Clubs values and objectives are aligned with those of the Mercury Bay Game Fishing Club and the clubs are both located within close proximity on the east coast of the Coromandel Peninsula.

2. RECREATIONAL FISHING VALUES IN THE COROMANDEL

- 2.1 Whitianga is a coastal community built on fishing—both recreational and charter-based. The right to access the ocean and catch fresh fish is fundamental to why people choose to live in or visit this region. Evidence of this can be seen in the prevalence of houses with oversized garages for storing boats, a thriving marina and marine services industry, four tackle shops and Hopper Developments' \$2 billion canal-based housing project, which includes boat jetties—clearly underscoring how integral fishing is to our local economy and lifestyle.
- 2.2 One of the region's greatest assets is the accessibility and safety of its boating and fishing areas. The proximity of sheltered bays and islands provides safe anchorage and secure fishing grounds. This is especially vital for smaller craft.
- 2.3 The coastal waters, out to the 12-mile limit, from Whitianga down to Waihi, falls within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. This area is already subject to legislation that requires both central and local government to consider and uphold marine biodiversity. We believe these existing protections are sufficient and well-founded. There is no demonstrated need—or public demand—for further layers of restrictive planning through the Resource Management Act.

3. CONCERNS REGARDING THE PROPOSED NO TAKE AREAS

- 3.1 Fisheries management and marine biodiversity protection are inherently complex issues, and we believe they are best addressed through the Fisheries Act 1996 and the Marine Reserves Act 1977 rather than the Resource Management Act 1991. The current Fisheries Act system provides for commercial, recreational, and customary interests, while at the same time ensuring sustainability. Imposing inflexible “no-take” zones through the Regional Coastal Plan represents a piecemeal approach that risks ultimately undermining environmental, social, and economic goals.
- 3.2 We understand that EDS is seeking to make all fishing a prohibited activity in the red/orange areas below (some of which are existing or proposed Marine Reserves or High Protection Areas). These proposed closures would effectively eliminate fishing opportunities in key local spots.



- 3.3 This blanket prohibition is not only excessive—it is a devastating overreach. Such a move would severely impact Whitianga and the wider Coromandel. If people lose the right to catch kai for their families, many will question the appeal of living in or visiting this remote coastal region.
- 3.4 The proposed closures would jeopardize major economic sectors, including tourism, hospitality, marine services, the charter fishing industry, real estate, and construction. These industries are vital to our community's well-being and sustainability.
- 3.5 The proposed closures also introduce safety concerns. Prohibiting fishing in sheltered areas may force boaties into riskier offshore conditions, increasing the potential for accidents or loss of life.

4. BIODIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 We question the justification for further closed areas in this region. We understand that EDS is pointing to the existence of kina barrens as a justification for their broad scale closures. I have seen no evidence as to whether kina barrens are occurring in all of the locations which EDS seeks to close. Many of these areas, to my knowledge, are in excellent condition. In any event, as snapper are reportedly increasing under current fisheries management rules, we do not agree that closed areas are appropriate to respond to kina barrens. We also note that Fisheries New Zealand have reported an increase in crayfish abundance since catch reductions in 2018, however, this increase has not been uniform across the fishery (CRA 2) and some areas are still undergoing a rebuild.
- 4.2 Moreover, further closed areas would displace fishing effort rather than reduce it. We have already seen this happen—boats from Tauranga now fish off Mercury Bay due to closures near Motiti. Such displacement increases pressure in other areas, akin to squeezing a balloon—it just expands elsewhere. This may lead to unsustainable levels of fishing in neighbouring areas.
- 4.3 We would like to highlight that there are much bigger issues than the recreational catch to address, like bulk destructive bottom contact fishing methods that we believe have caused widespread environmental damage and have lost their social license.
- 4.4 Another downside of closed areas is the restrictions they place on managing invasive marine pests such as Caulerpa seaweed and actively managing kina barrens through culls. Prohibiting intervention in these areas could allow these threats to spread unchecked, further harming biodiversity.

- 4.5 The assumption that reserves alone can restore marine ecosystems is flawed. We acknowledge that there are signs of kina barrens in some SIBA. However, we strongly believe that historic levels of fishing contributed to these barrens and that fisheries management decisions made by Fisheries NZ in recent decades to restrain snapper and crayfish harvest have been positive. In our view, effective fisheries management measures alongside active habitat restoration can address the historic effects of fishing and restore abundance in the marine environment.
- 4.6 Creating isolated “oases” in a broader “desert” will not address the core issues. A coordinated, Hauraki Gulf-wide management plan—one that includes more effective regulation of destructive bulk fishing methods—offers a far more promising path forward.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 We strongly oppose the proposed closed/no-take as outlined by EDS. These measures would have a profound and negative impact on recreational fishing in Whitianga, and on the livelihoods and well-being of communities across the Coromandel. They are blunt, inflexible tools that do not reflect the complexity of marine management.
- 5.2 We urge decision-makers to reject this approach and instead support comprehensive, inclusive strategies that genuinely benefit both the marine environment and the communities that rely on it.

Dated 17 April 2025

Gordon Mcivor