

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 SCOTT WILLIAM GRIERSON MACINDOE
ON BEHALF OF NEW ZEALAND SPORT FISHING COUNCIL**

Dated: 17 April 2025

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BROOKFIELDS
LAWYERS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Scott Macindoe.
- 1.2 I am the president of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council Inc (**NZSFC**). The NZSFC is a national sports organisation with over 37,000 affiliated members from 55 clubs nationwide. NZSFC supports the 750,000 New Zealanders that fish.
- 1.3 My evidence addresses:
 - (a) The process of the Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari, Marine Spatial Plan (**Sea Change Plan**) which provides critical context to inform this process
 - (b) The central government's response to the Sea Change Plan, including the "trawl corridors" proposal and the Hauraki Gulf / Tīkapa Moana Marine Protection Bill;
 - (c) The recreational fishing values of the Eastern Waikato Region / Coromandel;
 - (d) Adverse effects on recreational fishing as a result of the significant fishing closures proposed by the Environmental Defence Society (**EDS**).

2. SEA CHANGE TAI TIMU TAI PARI, MARINE SPATIAL PLAN

- 2.1 The Sea Change Plan planning process was initiated and funded by the Auckland Council and Waikato Regional Council. The Department of Conservation and Ministry of Fisheries supported the planning process
- 2.2 In October 2013, key leaders with an interest in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park were invited to participate in a democratic selection process to form the Stakeholder Working Group (**SWG**) representing those sectors that have an impact on or an interest in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. The group included Mana whenua, recreational and commercial fishing, farming, aquaculture, industry, community, and environmentalists. I participated in the SWG as a representative for the recreational sector.
- 2.3 The SWG was given a powerful mandate – restore abundance and protect habitats within the Marine Park while providing for the many communities that surround the Gulf.
- 2.4 During the planning process, it was quickly identified that one of the largest issues threatening the health of the Gulf was overfishing. A goal of a minimum of 40% of

original biomass is recommended by the plan. NZSFC's policy position is even more ambitious with a goal of a minimum of 50% of original biomass.

- 2.5 To properly effect and monitor the proposed changes to the Marine Park, the plan would have set the whole Park as a separate fisheries management area, with its own Total Allowable Catches (**TACs**) to be recommended by a reconstituted Hauraki Gulf Forum. This would enable focused decisions to directly provide for the rebuild within.
- 2.6 An essential step which was agreed was the removal of bottom trawling, Danish seining and dredging (both commercial and recreational) from the park to protect the fragile benthic communities. The commercial representatives requested time to action this, so the plan provided for the incremental removal of these methods until 2025 when they would be banned altogether. If implemented, this would have been a huge win for the health of the Gulf. The removal of destructive fishing methods and the protection of the sensitive benthic habitats was and remains an essential part of generating abundance.
- 2.7 The plan also included proposals for new Marine Protected Areas (**MPA's**). These would protect sensitive habitats with four types of MPA.
 - (a) Type 1 marine reserves would be no-take areas, other than the customary take allowed under current legislation and rarely approved by the Minister of Conservation.
 - (b) Type 2 benthic protection areas, which restrict fishing methods impacting the seabed.
 - (c) Special Management Areas are areas with specific focus on high-value recreational fishing, with targeted management restricting the recreational harvest of certain species and all commercial fishing.
 - (d) Finally, Ahu Moana to be established from the high tide mark extending one kilometre offshore. This bold initiative would allow for a new status for management decision making.
- 2.8 The marine spatial plan also involved the catchments feeding into the waters of the Park. Sedimentation was fingered as having a major impact on water quality and a number of objectives were set to reduce sedimentation to 2mm per annum above baseline, baseline being the original state of the land prior to large-scale land clearing.
- 2.9 The Marine Plan had the potential to be a massive step forward for the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. Some popular fishing areas were to be locked off inside marine

reserves, but in the end, this was a small price to pay to restore abundance to the entire Gulf. In this sense, the Sea Change Plan was an integrated pack of measures, which was carefully negotiated in good faith between the members of the SWG. All agreed it was a package deal, no cherry picking.

- 2.10 On 6 December 2016 the Sea Change Plan for the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park was presented for public review.

3. GOVERNMENTS REPONSE TO SEA CHANGE PLAN

- 3.1 In June 2021 the Government released “Revitalising the Gulf” in response to the Sea Change Plan. This did not reflect what was agreed in 2017. The Government’s plan did little to defend the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park from ongoing destructive fishing practices. The fishery interventions so urgently needed were absent, all left to be dealt with at a later date via a plan for a plan.
- 3.2 Fishing techniques such as bottom trawling, dredging, Danish seining and purse seining were no longer proposed to be phased outs. Revitalising the Gulf proposed that “trawl corridors” would be created, with little detail as to when and where. The Trawl corridors that were eventually consulted on in November 2023 largely provided for a continuation with the status quo, with all heavily trawled areas remaining open for exploitation.¹ Even these limited restrictions on trawling have not eventuated, with no decision from the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries, Shane Jones, to progress the proposals. From the Ministers public statements, it is clear that he will not countenance restrictions on trawling.²
- 3.3 Given all of this context, NZSFC has turned to the RMA and this regional coastal planning process to seek to have some of the promise of the Sea Change Plan made good on. Specifically, NZSFC seeks controls on fishing methods that harm the benthic environment such i.e. trawling and dredging. While NZSFC has a strong preference for the management of fishing under the Fisheries Act 1996, the stalling and failure of the policy process for restrictions on trawling and dredging under that Act leaves NZSFC with little choice but to seek alternative means to achieve maintenance and enhancement of the benthic environment.
- 3.4 Meanwhile the Revitalising the Gulf plan included proposals to restrict recreational fishing, limiting the ability of people fishing to put food on the table. Reliance was

¹ <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/59413-Trawl-corridors-supplementary-information-Fishing-October-2023>

² <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/could-shane-jones-be-the-fishing-champion-the-industry-is-looking-for/NTXSBKBLVJCINAQHJK7TWCILLA/>

placed on creating 18 new marine protected areas to reverse a century of damage. All indications are that the Hauraki Gulf / Tīkapa Moana Marine Protection Bill will soon pass into law. However, the proposed pockets of marine protected areas will merely shift fishing effort out into the wider Gulf and beyond, with no intent to manage the displaced effort. A bit like a balloon, if you squeeze it in one place the rest is put under pressure.

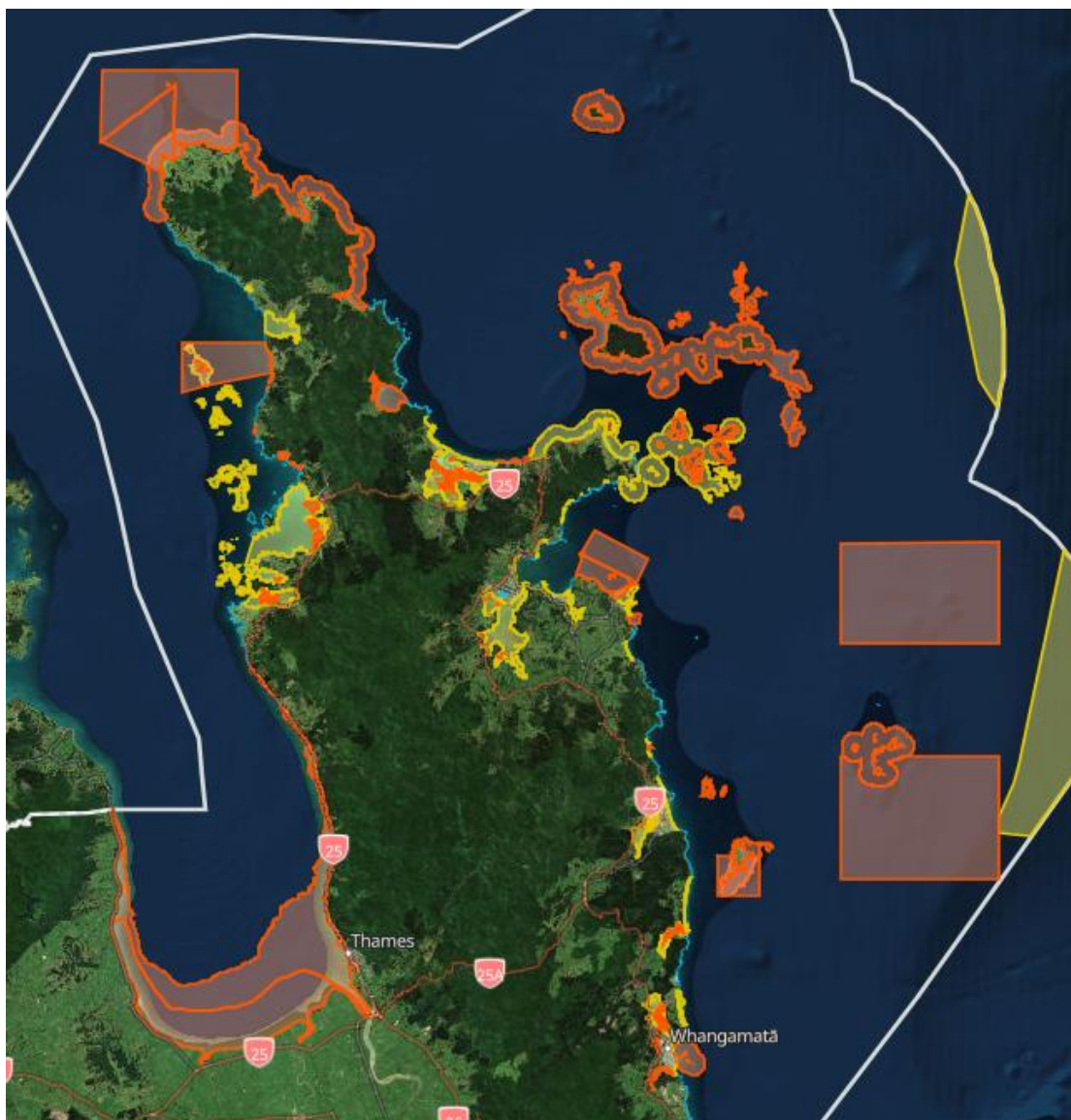
4. RECREATIONAL FISHING VALUES OF THE COROMANDEL

- 4.1 The recreational fishing values of the coromandel and associated offshore islands are outstanding.
- 4.2 The Eastern Coromandel coast has earned a nationwide reputation as a highly valued marine orientated lifestyle destination. This is manifested by the proliferation of popular clubs focused on marine activities that include recreational fishing. These clubs provide their many members (approximately 9,000 spread across 6 clubs), as well as the wider communities they nourish, with social cultural and economic benefits.
- 4.3 Various studies have highlighted the remarkable economy of recreational fishing accruing to these communities, none more so than the Coromandel and associated offshore islands. In 2018, Southwick et al published the paper “Estimating marine recreational fishing’s economic contributions in New Zealand” in the international Fisheries Research journal.³ Southwick found that of the \$946 million spent annually by more than 600,000 resident and visiting New Zealand fishers, these dollars circulate through the national economy, supporting 8000 jobs, stimulating \$1.7 billion in total economic activity, contributing \$638 million in Gross Domestic Product and \$342 million in salaries, wages and small business profits, while adding nearly \$187 million in tax revenues. While this data is on a nationwide basis, a significant proportion of this total would be attributable to the outstanding recreational fisheries of the Coromandel Peninsula.

5. EFFECTS ON RECREATIONAL FISHING FROM EDS PROPOSED CLOSURES

- 5.1 I understand that EDS is seeking to make all fishing a prohibited activity in the red/orange areas below (some of which are already Marine Reserves or High Protection Areas):

³ Southwick et al (2018) “*Estimating marine recreational fishing’s economic contributions in New Zealand*”
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0165783618301863?via%3Dihub>



- 5.2 This would have a devastating impact on recreational fishing in the region as well as on the economies of the many towns and settlements that make up the Coromandel.
- 5.3 One would reasonably expect that in proposing such draconian measures that EDS would present a proper analysis of costs and benefits. Had they done so it would be obvious that the proposed closures could not possibly be justified when compared to the social cultural and economic value of recreational fishing, and the low impact methods utilised by the recreational sector.
- 5.4 In my view the casual dismissal of cultural values and by the promotion of these closures are contemptable. Obviously, no consideration has been made for the displacement effect of these blunt and clumsy measures. If we are catching too many fish, then say so and enable us to better manage the harvest of fish region wide.

Dated 17 April 2025

Scott Macindoe