



Managing the impacts of bottom fishing in Tāmaki Makaurau

Shaun Lee FEBURARY 2021

Regularly dredged seabed near the Noises Islands in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. Photo by Shaun Lee.

Kia ora,



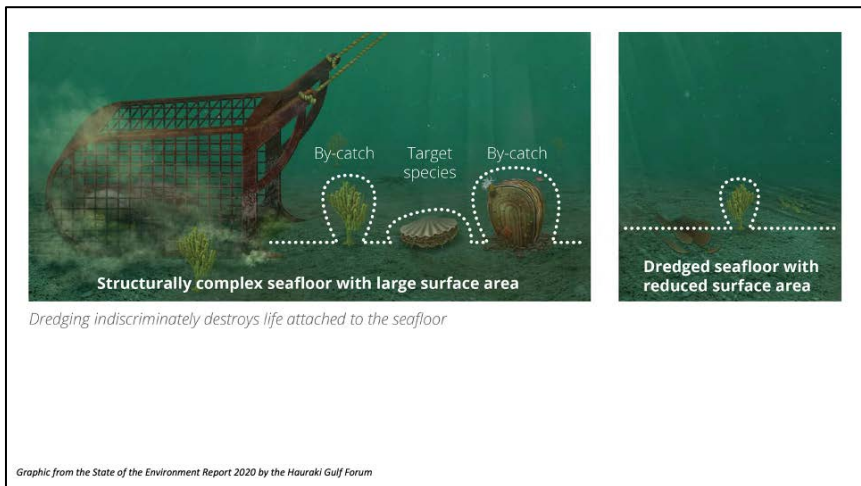
Thanks for making time to talk about Auckland's Seafloor, even tho its most of Auckland I don't imagine it's a hot topic of conversation for this committee. You should have my full report and request, I'm just going to quickly go over the main points.



Since late 2019 Auckland Council has had new responsibilities to protect indigenous biodiversity in the marine environment. You can use the Resource Management Act to control the effects of fishing provided you do not do so for Fisheries Act purposes. So if you value a fishing resource for more than just fishing, if you believe you want to preserve it for another reason, (including scientific, cultural and aesthetic values) then you can do this.



So its pretty exciting that you no longer have to ask DOC & MPI if you want to do marine protection, but where should you start?



Bottom impact fishing (dredging, bottom trawling and Danish seining) is the first thing Council should look to manage as it does the most damage to non-target species. By letting fishers continue to scrape the seafloor you're letting them smash down beautiful complex ecosystems that may take hundreds of years to grow back.

Here are some of the things I am asking you to protect and bring back.



Scallop beds

Scallop - Photo by Javier Couper



Mussel beds

A recovering mussel reef - Photo by Shaun Lee



Tubeworm mounds

Seafloor protected from bottom impact fishing by a nearby mussel farm near Coramandel. Photo by Shaun Lee.



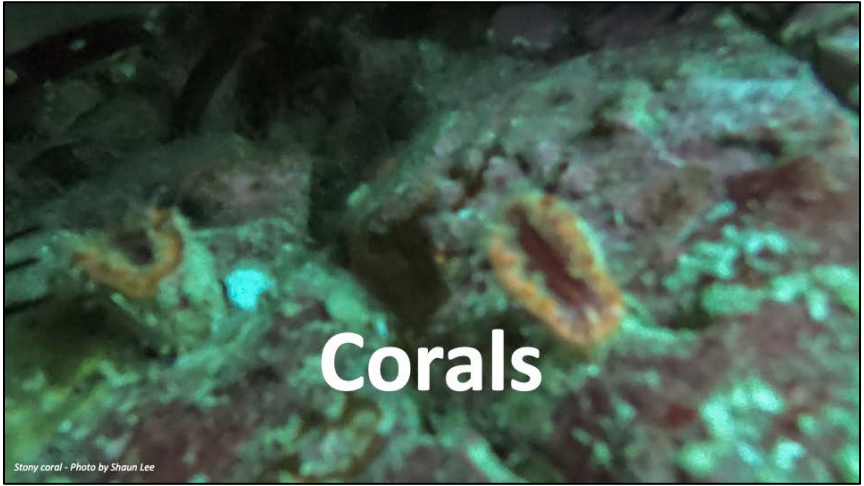
Horse mussel beds

Horse mussel bed, Mahuranga Harbour 1995 - Photo by Professor Simon Threlkeld



Dog cockle beds

Dog cockle bed near the Nohes Islands in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. Photo by Shaun Lee.



Corals

Stony coral - Photo by Shaun Lee



Sponge gardens

Fingers sponges near Moturua Island - Photo by Shaun Lee

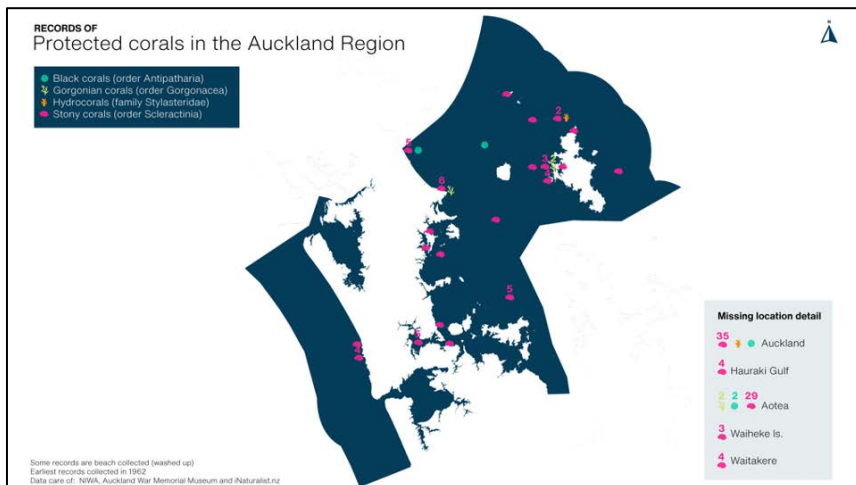
Bryozoans, Sea pens & Brachiopods

and that's just the ones that clean the water. There is whole other set of names for the stuff that stores carbon.



Mussel reef restoration - Photo by Shaun Lee

We only know how to restore one of those ecosystems, and I am quite sure it's going to cost more to restore than the money that was made from harvesting it.



We still have small pockets of coral left in Auckland, many of them are protected species because they are going extinct, but central Government is fine with fishers smashing them. I OIA'ed MPI and even they confirmed they are hauling them up in Auckland, the biggest haul was 200kgs of coral pulled up in one tow south of Aotea / Great Barrier Island. We cant just ask the people using these machines to avoid fishing areas with corals, because I checked the maps and seven years after that particular tragedy the area is still titled 'sheltered deep gravel'.

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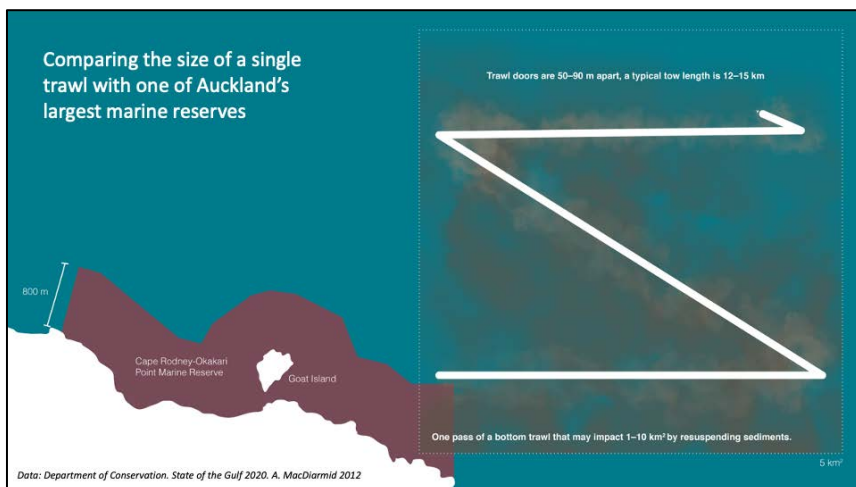
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Recreational dredging is going out of fashion as fishers get wise to the impacts. Most Auckland fishing stores have now stopped selling little dredges.

A trawl door from New Zealand retailer hampidjan.co.nz "The trawldoors will last for a long time even working the worst rock bottom" This one weighs seven tons.



You can still buy commercial bottom impact gear, here is a trawl door that weighs seven tonnes.



Here is an illustration that compares the scale of a single trawl with one of Auckland's largest marine reserves. Dragging gear across the seafloor kills more than just the sea life it smashes because it also re-suspends sediments. So if you're a filter feeding animal living nearby, the sediments choke you and you die and if you're a photosynthesising plant you get smothered and die. So the cumulative effects of just a few machines are massive.



- c) By 2018 ban the use of scallop dredges in areas less than 20m deep within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.
- d) By 2025, prohibit the use of scallop dredges within the entire Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

Sea Change suggested a phased approach to transition commercial and recreational scallop dredging out of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. It included a timeline.

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We're not asking you to do that,

1. Do bottom impact fishing methods comply with the Unitary Plan?
2. If so, please restore the ecological function of the seafloor by changing the operative Unitary Plan so these destructive activities require a resource consent.

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1. Do bottom impact fishing methods comply with the Unitary Plan?
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Auckland Council's consents team is applying the Motiti decision. The first thing they applied it to was mussel reef restoration. No one is now allowed to restore Auckland's seafloor from fishing damage without a resource consent. But Auckland Council is letting anyone go smash it up in the name of fishing.



Aotea / Great Barrier Island – Photo by Shaun Lee

Seafloor habitats are critical for Auckland’s biodiversity and Council now has legal responsibility to manage the protection and promotion of that biodiversity. Let's get started.