

Open letter to ministers

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Kia ora Ministers debating the Gulf protection bill

I have asked Fisheries New Zealand for information regarding the proposed concession to allow commercial ring net fishing¹ in two of the High Protection Areas (HPAs) in the Hauraki Gulf / Tīkapa Moana Marine Protection Bill². My understanding is that you may need to debate the concession in the House before the information is available.

Commercial ring net fishing in the proposed HPAs was not considered in:

- Sea Change - Tai Timu Tai Pari 2016³
- Report from the Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari Ministerial Advisory Committee 2020⁴
- Evaluation of Biodiversity Protected by Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari – Marine Protected Area Proposals NIWA 2020
- Agency analysis and advice on selection of MPAs towards development of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park MPA network⁵
- Revitalising the Gulf 2021 consultation phases 1⁶ & 2⁷

¹ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/significant-protection-hauraki-gulft%C4%ABkapa-moana>

² <https://legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2023/0282/latest/whole.html>

³ <https://gulffournal.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/5086-SCTTP-Marine-Spatial-Plan-WR.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/our-work/sea-change/report-sea-change-ministerial-advisory-committee.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/our-work/sea-change/marine-protection-technical-document.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/our-work/sea-change/revitalising-the-gulf.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/getting-involved/consultations/2022/revitalising-the-gulf-2223/revitalising-the-gulf-information-document.pdf>

- Revitalising the Gulf Stage 1 – Impact of the Marine Protection Proposals on Commercial Fishers (Martin Jenkins)⁸
- Regulatory Impact Statement⁹
- Advice from Environment select committee on Hauraki Gulf Marine Protection Bill 2024¹⁰

To aid decision making I have prepared a preliminary impact analysis.

University of Auckland Marine Science Professors Simon Thrush and Conrad Pilditch have confirmed that the concessions will violate international guidelines for what is defined as ‘protected’¹¹. The Hauraki Gulf Forum has argued against the concession¹² which is inconsistent with their 30% protection goal¹³.

The marine protection areas proposed by Sea Change - Tai Timu Tai Pari had seven objectives that were assessed by Fisheries New Zealand and the Department of Conservation in 2021¹⁴. A concession to allow this fishing method would undermine all seven marine protection objectives in the marine spatial plan (numbered below).

Objective 1: *To set aside places where mana whenua and communities want to experience abundance and diversity of marine and coastal life.*

This objective would be undermined because the fishing method targets and removes the large schools of fish that provide the experience of abundance.

⁸ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/getting-involved/consultations/2022/revitalising-the-gulf-2223/revitalise-gulf-commercial-fishers-report.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/our-work/sea-change/regulatory-impact-statement-redacted.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://selectcommittees.parliament.nz/v/SelectCommitteeReport/492b9858-82ea-43d3-528a-08dc90b8774f>

¹¹ <https://newsroom.co.nz/2024/10/19/beware-the-snags-in-hauraki-gulf-protections/>

¹² <https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/16-10-2024/why-last-minute-changes-to-the-hauraki-gulf-protection-bill-are-stirring-up-a-stink>

¹³ <https://gulffjournal.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/HGF-Workplan.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/our-work/sea-change/marine-protection-technical-document.pdf>



School of Parore. Photo Shaun Lee.

Objective 2: *To identify and protect the full range of marine communities and ecosystems with high biodiversity value by 2020.*

and

Objective 3: *To identify and protect enough of each habitat type to ensure ecosystem integrity and resilience.*

There are three shallow sheltered bays in the proposed protection network, the proposed concession would compromise two of these communities and ecosystems reducing the integrity and resilience of these habitats. The unaffected HPA at Cape Coleville covers less than half of a bay.

Objective 4: *Through these areas, develop a baseline to better understand the ecological integrity of ecosystems within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, including progressing the knowledge on impacts of human activities.*

It's important we protect rare and fragile habits like the Rhodolith Bed in Albert Shoal in the Kawau Bay HPA from weighted nets, not just from further damage but to see if/how this habitat responds to marine protection. To my knowledge there are no protected Rhodolith Beds in Aotearoa New Zealand.



Rhodolith Bed. Photo Shaun Lee.

Objective 5: *To provide reference areas for marine research, monitoring and education and*

Objective 6: *To provide opportunities for the enjoyment of restored marine environments through education, and sustainable recreation and tourism*

The Kawau Bay HPA is one of only three of the HPAs accessible from the mainland and it's the closest one to Auckland. Large schools of forage fish at this location provide an important educational opportunity. The Motutapu / Rangitoto HPA has similar values and was specifically located for the islands outdoor educational camp.

Objective 7: *To conserve and protect cultural and spiritual values and practices associated with nature according to tikanga such as solitude, protection of wāhi tapu and connection to tupuna.*

CEOs of both Ngāti Manuhiri¹⁵ and Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki¹⁶ (who are most affected by the proposed concessions) have publicly objected to commercial ring net fishing in the HPAs indicating that the concession to commercial ring net fishing violates these values.

¹⁵ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/530597/govt-wants-new-marine-protection-areas-in-hauraki-gulf-while-allowing-some-fishing>

¹⁶ <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/kahu/using-the-poor-to-justify-commercial-fishers-in-the-hauraki-gulf-hpas-is-weak-says-iwi-leader/HG7LNSSQ3VAH50OZNNMDHCDEQQ/>

I hope this analysis aids in your decision making.

Shaun Lee