



Hauraki Gulf Forum
Tikapa Moana
Te Moananui a Toi

Weaving the Strands

Promoting and facilitating integrated management around the Hauraki Gulf – Tikapa Moana

A worthy jigsaw puzzle

Listening to presentations from the high calibre speakers at our recent *Charting the Enhancement Pathway* seminar drew comparisons to assembling a jigsaw puzzle.

According to Wikipedia, “a jigsaw puzzle is a tiling puzzle that requires the assembly of numerous small, often oddly shaped, interlocking and tessellating pieces. Each piece usually has a small part of a picture on it; when assembled, a jigsaw puzzle produces a complete picture.”

So it is when drawing together the threads of policy-relevant discussions which determine how we manage the Hauraki Gulf and the state it is kept in.

Science advisor to the Prime Minister Sir Peter Gluckman described policy making at one stage as “bloody difficult”, advocated the use of science to inform trade-off decisions, and underlined the importance of environmental quality for our economic future.

We received fascinating updates on the latest research on the Gulf’s resident Bryde’s whale, its world-class seabird fauna and the over-looked, almost-gone but extremely-valuable mussel beds.

Paul Majurey identified low hanging fruit for improving environmental quality and the interests of mana whenua in this goal; Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment Dr Jan Wright delivered a ‘101’ course on water pollution; while Professor David Hamilton explained how limit setting requirements are on their way, informed by deliberations at the Land and Water Forum.



Museum seminar provides perspective on Gulf.

Fisheries scientists told us of a growing consensus about the need to manage fish stocks like snapper at a much higher stock level than we have in the past – around 40 percent of natural biomass – and the willingness of recreational fishers to support achieving this. Massey University researchers rounded the session out showing how marine reserves could also breathe life into the Gulf.

The seminar was our third and most ambitious. Last year we told the story of the *State of our Gulf* – its historical transformation and current situation where most environmental indicators either show negative trends or remain at levels which are indicative of poor environmental condition.

This year we located the efforts of many groups in a response framework aimed squarely at enhancement. It is appreciation and validation of the varied parts actors can play in this task that will enable us to complete the jigsaw and achieve our vision.

The New Zealand Herald did a great service capturing the quality of discussions. You can read it here: <http://tinyurl.com/9fprezp>



Mayor John Tregidga,
Chair, Hauraki Gulf Forum



Island hopping kaka.



Boating boosts economy.



We're residents too.

Being bold for biodiversity

Tiritiri Matangi pioneer Dr John Craig and radio commentator Graeme Hill helped the Auckland Council launch its indigenous biodiversity strategy with fanfare last month.

The strategy sets a vision and objectives for protecting the region’s biodiversity, plus specific targets which include no regional species extinctions and no net loss of ecosystem functions and services. The strategy clearly links the protection of the natural environment to Auckland’s aspirations to be the world’s most liveable city. It provides guidance on biodiversity management within statutory provisions, on publically owned assets (for example stormwater infrastructure, local and regional parks) and through community projects, including working with private landowners.

Chair of the Parks, Recreation and Heritage Forum Councillor Sandra Coney said producing the strategy so quickly after amalgamation showed the commitment of Council to maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity.

One project recently initiated with the University of Auckland models bird movements from island populations to mainland sites (and vice versa). It includes kaka populations on Great Barrier and Little Barrier Island and will be used to identify significant habitats and environmental variables.

<http://tinyurl.com/9aazyps>

It’s the economy, stupid

If property prices seem out of reach, blame the Gulf. A recent investigation by Auckland Council on the impact of Hauraki Gulf amenity on prices showed a wide water view could increase land value by 50 percent and a coastline location by 43 percent. As distance from beach access doubled, the land price declined by 17 percent. The study used hedonic price modelling for more than 8500 properties in 12 census area units on the North Shore.

Meanwhile, initial work on a total economic valuation for the Gulf, prepared by Auckland Council economists for the Hauraki Gulf Forum, shows the significant contribution tourism, boating and recreational fishing activities make toward Auckland and Waikato’s GDP and employment. It indicates the synergy between economic growth opportunities and investments in improving environmental state.

Smart tool for spatial planning

A marine spatial planning process for the Hauraki Gulf, expected to start early next year, will be aided by an online program called SeaSketch. The SeaSketch tool will enhance public and stakeholder interaction and participation, says Department of Conservation’s marine conservation team manager, Sean Cooper.

By sandwiching a cross-section of information and applying it to a digital map of our coast, planners will be able

to crunch a wide range of data when considering potential areas for aquaculture, biodiversity protection or other uses. The tool can produce reports on implications for other users, and options will be able to be shared, discussed and modified, enabling refined proposals to be fed into the planning process.

“This provides a way for stakeholders to get involved and have a say over what goes on around the coast and how it’s managed,” Mr Cooper said.

Central and local government agencies, mana whenua and the Hauraki Gulf Forum are working together on a stakeholder driven planning approach for the Hauraki Gulf.

Marine futures

NIWA has been successful in the latest Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment science investment round with a project to explore marine futures for New Zealand.

Lead scientist Simon Thrush says the project will link both social and biophysical sciences to explore how values determine the way we use natural resources and the environmental consequences of those choices.

The Hauraki Gulf is one of two areas of focus for the project and the work is expected to complement and support discussions among stakeholders in the formulation of a marine spatial plan for the Gulf, beginning next year.

www.msi.govt.nz/assets/Get-Funded-Documents/2012-Science-Investment-Round-Environmental/marine-futures.pdf



On a come back trail?



Ant alert.



Bottlenose dolphins frequent Okupu, Great Barrier Island.



Meola Reef.



More hope for whales.



Mussel props for Gulf theatre.

Sniffing out ants

The Auckland Council is using an ant detection dog to tackle a serious insect pest in the Hauraki Gulf. Rhys Jones, a Welsh springer spaniel, was certified recently with his handler Brian Shields, a Hauraki Gulf biosecurity contractor.

Argentine ants threaten native insects, skinks and birds, either attacking them directly or competing for food. They can also take over native plant root systems. They are present on the Auckland mainland and some Hauraki Gulf islands.

Rhys sniffs out ant trails, marking spots for follow up control work.

www.treasureislands.co.nz

Dolphin haven

Recent research by Massey University scientists shows the importance of Great Barrier Island waters for the northeast coast bottlenose dolphin population.

Dedicated boat surveys and photo-identification of individual dolphins since January 2011 show the species occurs in Great Barrier waters year round. The majority of sightings occurred in inshore shallow coastal waters within 2 km of land, despite extensive offshore survey effort, with the same dolphins sighted repeatedly.

Bottlenose dolphins were recently listed as nationally endangered, due to declines in other regional populations. The research suggests Great Barrier is an important site for future conservation management efforts.

<http://cmrg.massey.ac.nz>

Watch this space

Issue 15 of *Weaving the Strands* reported new research suggesting the once common green-lipped mussel beds of the Gulf may be restorable. Now a broad-ranging group of interested parties are exploring whether the research can be extended to a practical restoration project.

Mussel beds once covered much of the Firth of Thames and Tamaki Strait, playing an important ecosystem role through nutrient cycling, water filtration, providing habitat structure, biodiversity and food web dynamics. They were dredged almost out of existence in the 1920-1960s and haven't recovered naturally on the muddy bottom which replaced the beds once fished out.

Hauraki Gulf Forum Manager Tim Higham said he was surprised by interest shown in their restoration, following a presentation by NIWA scientist Darren Parsons at the recent *Charting the Enhancement Pathway* seminar. "It has stimulated a lot of discussion among biologists and active community people as to whether it creates the opportunity for a new type of restoration project for the Gulf."

New beginnings

The Crown this month signed a deed to collectively settle the historical claims of iwi and hapū over shared interests in the Auckland area, including maunga (volcanic cones) and motu (islands).

Rangitoto, Motutapu, Motuihe and Tiritiri Matangi will vest in the Tāmaki Collective and after a month will be vested back with the Crown for the benefit of all New Zealanders. Three areas on Rangitoto will vest in the permanent ownership of Ngā Mana Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau. They are the summit of Rangitoto and two sites at Islington Bay associated with historical waka mooring (Islington Bay Community Hall and Islington Bay Bach 80).

Browns Island (also known as Motukorea) will continue to be owned by the Auckland Council and managed by the Department of Conservation as per the Council's arrangement with the Department. Under this arrangement it will be included in a Motu Conservation Management Plan for the inner Gulf Islands provided for by the deed of settlement. Maungauika/North Head will be co-governed by the Tāmaki Collective and the Auckland Council through a new body called the Tū puna Maunga o Tāmaki Makaurau Authority (the Maunga Authority).

The Tāmaki Makaurau Collective Treaty Deed includes two new and 18 altered place names. A further group of original Māori place names for seven islands and hills will be listed by the New Zealand Geographic Board in its Gazetteer of place names and will be publicly discoverable, together with the associated histories. The next step is for the deed to be given effect by legislation.

www.ots.govt.nz

Looking out for whales

A follow up workshop to find solutions to Bryde's whale ship strike, organised jointly by the Hauraki Gulf Forum, Environmental Defence Society (EDS) and University of Auckland, has identified a number of actions that can be undertaken immediately. These include keeping a better lookout on vessels, reporting whale sightings and narrowing the shipping lane into the Port of Auckland.

Reducing the speed of vessels in the Hauraki Gulf warrants further investigation and could be trialled on vessels with flexibility in their port schedules. The Department of Conservation will lead a small working group to advance short-term voluntary measures with shipping interests as well as longer-term regulatory controls.

On average two Bryde's whales are killed each year in the Hauraki Gulf as a result of ship strike, an alarming figure given that only 40 to 50 are resident in the Gulf year round. The plight of the whales is documented in a new book *Wonders of the Sea: The protection of New Zealand's marine mammals* released by EDS last month.

www.eds.org.nz/shop/publication/13.htm

The Hauraki Gulf Forum is a statutory body charged with the promotion and facilitation of integrated management and the protection and enhancement of the Hauraki Gulf. The Forum has representation on behalf of the Ministers of Conservation, Fisheries and Māori Affairs, elected representatives from Auckland Council (including the Great Barrier and Waiheke local boards), Waikato Regional Council, and the Waikato, Hauraki, Thames Coromandel and Matamata Piako district councils, plus six representatives of the tangata whenua of the Hauraki Gulf and its islands.

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The Gulf as theatre

A six week season of promenade show *Journey to the Deep* begins at the end of this month in the silos of Auckland waterfront. The show will enable 40,000 school children and members of the public to travel through the Hauraki Gulf with theatrical actors and props and learn about the issues it faces.

"Journey aims to create a sense of wonder and curiosity about marine environments and provide a springboard for teaching and learning," says creative director Sarah Burren.

www.journeytothedeep.com

Umupuia cockles

Ngai Tai Umupuia Te Waka Totara Trust, on behalf of Umupuia Marae and Ngai Tai, has requested a further two-year temporary closure to the taking of cockles at Umupuia Beach, Manukau. The existing two year seasonal closure is due to end on October 15.

Umupuia Beach is closed under section 186A of the Fisheries Act 1996, which enables temporary closures to recognise and provide for the use and management practices of tangata whenua in the exercise of non-commercial fishing rights.

Between 1998 and 2007 overall cockle populations declined at Umupuia. There has been an increase since but in 2009 only 1 to 2 percent of the population were above the preferred harvesting size (>30mm).

The Ministry for Primary Industries has consulted on the proposal and the Minister's decision is expected shortly.

Swans signal health

Black swans in the Waitemata are a sign of improvement in the harbour according Auckland Council biologist Dr Tim Lovegrove. He links their increasing numbers to recovery of Zostera (seagrass) beds on which they feed, particularly around Meola Reef near Westmere.

Recent paleontological studies show that the black swan, although introduced, is probably a naturally-occurring species in New Zealand, because bones from the extinct New Zealand swan are almost indistinguishable from those of the Australian black swan.

"What we are seeing now with the expansion of swans and the recovery of Zostera is a more natural state, probably typical in many sheltered coastal ecosystems in pre-human New Zealand," says Dr Lovegrove.