Hauraki Gulf Forum
Tīkapa Moana
Te Moananui-ā-Toi

SUBMISSION

Proposed temporary fishery closures in the Hauraki Gulf (2026)

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Hauraki Gulf Forum submission: Proposed temporary fishery closures in the Hauraki Gulf

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Introduction

E ngā iwi o Tīkapa Moana, arā ko Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, ko Ngāti Tamaterā, ko Ngāti Pāoa hoki, tēnei tā mātou mihi atu nei. Ka nui te whakahonore ki a koutou i tō koutou ahi kā roa me tō koutou hononga tuku iho ki te Tīkapa Moana Te Moananui-ā-Toi. Ka whakamihi mātou ki tō koutou mana, ki tō koutou kaitiakitanga, me tō koutou rangatiratanga ki runga i ēnei rohe moana, ā, ka tautoko mātou i ā koutou mahi ki te whakaora i te mauri me te whakapiki anō hoki i te oranga o te moana.

To the iwi of Tīkapa Moana, Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, Ngāti Tamaterā, and Ngāti Pāoa, we extend our gratitude. We hugely respect you for your long-standing connection to Tīkapa Moana Te Moananui-ā-Toi. We acknowledge your authority, guardianship, and sovereignty over these marine areas, and we support your efforts to restore the mauri and enhance the health of the ocean.

Nō reira, we thank the Committee for the opportunity to submit on the Proposed temporary fishery closures in the Hauraki Gulf.

Parliament has already decided that the Hauraki Gulf warrants a distinct, integrated management framework because of its national significance and ecological vulnerability.

The Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000 (HGMPA) was established to recognise and manage the historic, traditional, cultural, and spiritual relationship of the tangata whenua with the Hauraki Gulf/Tīkapa Moana/Te Moananui-ā-Toi Marine Park, including its islands, shorelines and marine ecosystems.

The Hauraki Gulf Forum is the statutory body established under the HGMPA to promote the integrated management and long-term protection of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and its catchments.

The Forum brings together tangata whenua, local government, and central government representatives, providing a collaborative governance structure for an area where management responsibilities and environmental pressures span multiple jurisdictions.

The Hauraki Gulf Forum welcomes the opportunity to submit on the proposed extension of temporary fishery closures requested by Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, Ngāti Tamaterā, and Ngāti Pāoa. Our submission relates to:

- Umupuia Beach: closed to the harvest of cockles
- Te Mātā and Waipatukahu (Thames coast, Coromandel Peninsula): closed to the harvest of oysters, mussels, pipi, and cockles

- Waiheke Island (Hauraki Gulf): closed to the harvest of mussels, rock lobster, and pāua.

The Forum supports the extension of these closures. This support reflects both the rationale set out in the iwi application, and the Forum's statutory purpose to promote the integrated management, protection, and restoration of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

The Forum considers that this collective application represents a practical and locally-led response to ongoing pressures on the mauri and productivity of the Gulf.

We would also like to acknowledge support given by local communities as this plays a big part in the success of these closures. Local communities are instrumental in providing education and monitoring work that happens in these areas, and their support for the intentions of mana whenua as well as the success of rāhui in general is greatly appreciated by the Forum.

Context

The request for extension reflects the need to continue allowing time for recovery in areas that remain under pressure.

Information accompanying the application indicates that limiting harvest has contributed to improvements in the condition and availability of affected species, alongside broader ecological gains. These changes, however, are still developing and require continuity to be sustained.

The Forum considers this to be a sound basis for extension. Recovery in nearshore environments are gradual, and gains achieved over short timeframes are unlikely to be durable without continued protection.

Recommendations

Timeframes for Recovery

The Forum notes that the current application process requires closures to be considered and renewed at relatively short intervals. The recovery of shellfish beds and associated coastal habitats often occurs over longer timeframes than these administrative cycles. Interruptions or uncertainty in management settings can risk slowing or reversing progress.

The Forum therefore supports an approach where the duration and continuation of rāhui is informed by the condition of the ecosystem, and by those with direct knowledge of it. In this context, mana whenua are best placed to determine when recovery has progressed sufficiently to reconsider harvesting.

Providing greater flexibility within the existing framework, while maintaining appropriate statutory oversight, would better align management timelines with ecological realities and support more effective long-term outcomes.

Mana Whenua Leadership

The Forum places significant weight on the leadership demonstrated by Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, Ngāti Tamaterā, and Ngāti Pāoa.

The application reflects the exercise of kaitiakitanga, informed by deep knowledge of place and long-standing relationships with these environments.

The Forum recognises that this leadership is central to restoring the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park and supports continued use of mechanisms that enable mana whenua to lead place-based responses.

Monitoring and Partnership

The Forum considers that ongoing monitoring will be critical to understanding the effectiveness of these closures and informing future decisions.

There is a clear opportunity to strengthen partnerships with mana whenua in this area, recognising their role as kaitiaki and their ability to undertake observation and assessment grounded in both mātauranga Māori and local practice.

Supporting mana whenua to lead or co-lead monitoring programmes would:

- improve understanding of changes in species condition and abundance
- strengthen the evidence base for future decision-making
- reinforce the connection between management actions and local stewardship

The Forum encourages government to provide appropriate support for this work, including resourcing and collaboration with relevant agencies, so that monitoring can be sustained over time and inform adaptive management.

Alignment with Forum Objectives

The Forum's role is to promote the integrated management and restoration of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

The proposed closures align with this role by:

- reducing pressure on inshore ecosystems
- enabling recovery of species and habitats
- supporting place-based management approaches
- integrating customary practice with statutory tools

The Forum considers that these elements are essential to achieving long-term restoration and improving the health of the Marine Park.

Concluding remarks

The Hauraki Gulf Forum supports the extension of the temporary fishery closures requested by Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, Ngāti Tamaterā, and Ngāti Pāoa.

The proposal aligns with the purpose of section 186A, demonstrates strong mana whenua leadership, and contributes to the restoration of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

The Forum recommends that the Minister approve the requested extensions to the temporary closures in full.

About the Hauraki Gulf Forum

The Hauraki Gulf Forum is a statutory governance board established under the *HGMPA 2000* to promote the conservation and management of the natural, historic, and physical resources of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people and communities of the Hauraki Gulf and New Zealand.

The Forum consists of representatives from tangata whenua of the Hauraki Gulf and its islands; the Ministers of Conservation, Oceans and Fisheries and Māori Development; and elected members appointed by the Auckland Council, Hauraki District Council, Matamata-Piako District Council, Thames-Coromandel District Council, Waikato District Council and Waikato Regional Council.

The Forum is required to present triennial reports regarding the state of the environment of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. More information on the Forum and the Marine Park is available at www.haurakigulfforum.org.nz

The Hauraki Gulf Marine Park

The Hauraki Gulf Marine Park is New Zealand's first marine park, established by the *HGMPA* in February 2000. At 1.2 million hectares (20 times the size of Lake Taupō) it stretches from Te Arai in the north to Waihi in the south and includes the Waitematā Harbour, Gulf Islands, Firth of Thames and the east coast of the Coromandel Peninsula. The Park is the seabird capital of the world, and a whale superhighway, but as successive State of the Hauraki Gulf reports have shown, it is a shadow of its former self.