



Weaving the Strands

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

Growing teeth

In the last few weeks an independent hearings panel has released its decision on an application to dispose of marina dredgings in the inner gulf.

The panel approved dredging – recognising the importance of recreational boating and associated infrastructure – but refused disposal in the area adjacent to Pine Harbour Marina near Whitford.

Commissioners stated such disposal was “repugnant to the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act management objectives.”

The ruling is important as decision makers have for too long overlooked the significance of the legislation.

The issue of dredging and dumping spoil in the gulf was one of the issues that galvanised public support for the marine park, led in no small part by Mike Lee, chairman of the Auckland Regional Council.

It is pleasing to see the Act’s objectives – which require management agencies to focus on sustaining the life supporting capacity of the gulf, protecting and enhancing its resources, and recognising tangata whenua relations – now being reflected in case law and planning documents.

Last year we produced *Governing the Gulf: Implementing the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act through Policies and Plans*, which has been formally adopted by three quarters of the councils which make up the Hauraki Gulf Forum.

The act has national policy statement-status and must be given effect to in



Important decisions at (clockwise) Omaha, Wairoa River, Pine Harbour, Owahi Bay

the policies and planning documents produced by councils and other management agencies.

In Hauraki District we will be notifying our proposed district plan later this month. It contains a coastal zone provision designed to protect areas bordering the important wetland and shorebird habitats of the southern Firth of Thames. A similar rural zone provision in the Rodney District Plan was important in the recent Environment Court decision to decline a residential development above Omaha Beach.

Environment Waikato is looking very carefully at ways it can improve water quality through its draft Regional Policy Statement, due for consultation shortly. The council’s policy committee chair

Paula Southgate says water quality problems are many and complex. “It’s only through the development of sound policies – backed by solid actions – that we will make a difference.”

With aquaculture expansion high on the agenda, it is essential that central government works closely with councils to ensure that demand for public space and assessments of environmental impacts are carefully addressed.

The Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act needs to be applied in a committed way to realise the vision of integrated management and improving environmental quality around the gulf.

**Mayor John Tregidga, MNZM JP
Chairman, Hauraki Gulf Forum**



Coastal character important

Coastal character recognised

Recent decisions of the Environment Court are placing greater weight on preserving the natural character of the coastline.

This month judges rejected a scheme to build up to 500 homes and a visitor lodge on high land behind Omaha Beach. The area south of the Omaha residential area was judged inappropriate for urban development. It confirmed the Rodney District Plan provision of a rural zone to protect landscape and biological features.

In June the Environment Court declined a 279 home canal-front development on the Wairoa River near Clevedon, overturning a Manukau City Council district plan change. In July the court also reversed Auckland City Council's resource consent approval for the building of two houses at remote Owahi Bay, near Stony Batter, on the eastern end of Waiheke Island.

ARC Chairman Mike Lee has welcomed the decisions saying "they clearly reflect what Aucklanders and our tourist visitors really value."

Harbour dumping refused

An independent hearings panel for the ARC has refused an application by Pine Harbour Marina to dump dredged sediment from the approach channel and marina entrance in waters around nearby Motukaraka Island.

In addition to its concerns about the unknown cumulative effects of contaminants, and potential dispersal of contaminated sediments the hearings panel found the dumping "would be repugnant to the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act management objectives."

Pine Harbour Marina is the only company in recent years to seek to dispose of dredgings in Auckland's near shore gulf environment. Other companies place dredgings within contained reclamations or dispose of them at a designated deep water site outside the Hauraki Gulf.

The decision has been appealed to the Environment Court.

Dairy impact under scrutiny

The ARC reports 94 percent of dairy farms are in compliance with environmental standards, up 17 per cent from last season

Environmental Management Committee chair Dianne Glenn attributes the improvement to visits to all non-compliant farms by ARC's Rural Compliance Team to resolve issues and promote good practice, working closely with Fonterra's Sustainable Dairying Advisor.

Meanwhile Environment Waikato Policy Committee chair Paula Southgate says "the new draft of our Regional Policy Statement – due for consultation shortly – will specifically propose that we do more to protect water bodies of high quality and improve those which have



Dairy compliance up



Sea slugs back

become degraded like the Waihou." A recent report from the Parliamentary Commissioner found the Waihou – which drains into the Firth of Thames – to be the country's third most contaminated river.

www.ew.govt.nz/Policy-and-plans/Regional-Policy-Statement/Regional-Policy-Statement-Review

Sea slug warning

The ARC has again warned North Shore residents to be especially cautious about toxic sea slugs on beaches.

Easterly winter winds have caused the slugs to be washed up off Narrow Neck Beach in Auckland's Devonport in recent weeks.

The slugs are very toxic to dogs, and potentially toxic to humans.

ARC divers found high numbers of the slugs off Cheltenham and Narrow Neck beaches but they are also present on other parts of the coastline throughout the North Shore and the Hauraki Gulf.

Research into the toxicity and distribution of the sea slugs continues, including a possible link with the invasive Asian date mussel, introduced into the Waitemata Harbour in the 1970s, on which the slugs live.

The ARC will continue coordinating the efforts of agencies involved in the response.

www.arphs.govt.nz and www.arc.govt.nz/seaslugs



Aquaculture reforms outlined



Airport due



Blue print out

Aquaculture reform

The government has outlined the next steps in its agenda to reform aquaculture regulations.

This includes using legislation to alter rules in the Waikato Regional Plan to allow diversified aquaculture activities in Wilsons Bay and other existing marine farms. The legislation will also allow small scale extensions to marine farms outside the Wilsons Bay zone.

About 2500 hectares of suspended aquaculture applications in Environment Waikato's area of responsibility in the western Firth will be re-activated under the proposals. The Government is expected to provide tools to help the council manage high demand for use of public space.

The move has raised concerns among environmental groups because opportunities for public input into the plan change process are being removed. Environmental scrutiny before new space or species changes are implemented will need to take place during the consent application process.

www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Aquaculture+Reform/default.htm#papers2 and www.eds.org.nz/content/documents/pressreleases/Aquaculture%20press%20release%20100722.pdf

Fanworm control called off

MAF Biosecurity New Zealand has announced it has given up trying to prevent the spread of the Mediterranean fanworm in the Waitemata harbour.

The fanworm was first detected in the Viaduct Basin area in August 2009 – five individuals on wharf structures and a heavy infestation on a barge tied up in the area.

However, in January this year more than 60 specimens were confirmed in the inner harbour, up to 13 km from the viaduct treatment area.

MAFBNZ said its programme to rid New Zealand waters of the introduced pest had been called off, with new information showing it is too widespread to eradicate.

“Closure of the fanworm elimination programme in no way rules out action against introduced marine pests in the future, but it recognises that once an organism is well established, it is very difficult to eliminate it. Boat owners and operators also have a role to play in limiting the further spread of the Mediterranean fanworm, and other fouling pests like it.”

www.biosecurity.govt.nz/media/14-06-10/fanworm-response-close

Blueprint milestone

The Coromandel Peninsula Blueprint project has released its long-term growth and development strategy, Framework for our Future, in both English and Te Reo Maori.

It asks residents “to imagine the year is 2050 and the Coromandel Peninsula is a place that embraces its natural taonga, has diverse and vibrant centres, has resilient communities and where generations can live, work and enjoy.”

Getting there – identifying the services and infrastructure required while protecting the environment – is the focus of the strategy, developed by Thames-Coromandel District Council, Environment Waikato, the Department of Conservation and Hauraki Whaanui.

The project will now produce Local Area Blueprints in which the community's views and technical information are gathered and blended to create detailed plans for localised areas.

www.coroblueprint.govt.nz

New on Barrier

Great Barrier Island will have a new airport facility in time for Christmas, due to a capital works project by Auckland City Council.

The Department of Conservation has awarded a contract to build a new 20 bunk hut on Mt Heale, an important step in developing multi day walking opportunities on the island. The hut is being constructed off-site and will be flown in to enable completion in November 2010. It will link with tramping tracks to the summit of Mt Hirakimata and the existing Kaiaraara Hut.

Meanwhile, there is good news for pateke, or brown teal, which appear to be increasing after declines in the mid-1990s which prompted a conservation programme. DoC's latest count estimates the island population at between 761 and 927 birds.



University partnership



Run helps



Footprints saved

Environment report partnership

The University of Auckland's Marine Teaching and Research Department will help produce the next state of the environment report with the Hauraki Gulf Forum.

The three yearly reports assess the effectiveness of management responses to important issues affecting the health of the gulf.

Professor of Marine Science and Director of the Leigh Marine Laboratory John Montgomery said that while local authorities routinely collect monitoring information on the state of coastal waters there was an opportunity to better understand the dynamics of the gulf system through modeling and to define a future research agenda for the gulf.

The next state of the environment report will be published in June 2011.

Mahurangi plan launched

A draft catchment plan for the Mahurangi Harbour prepared by the ARC and Rodney District Council with community groups and tangata whenua was launched in June.

The plan builds on a successful five year pilot project, initiated after monitoring programmes highlighted the deteriorating health of the harbour.

The plan aims to reduce sediment generation and improve water quality for recreation and commercial uses. Actions have focussed on fencing, planting and education with landowners and communities.

www.arc.govt.nz/environment/coastal-and-marine/mahurangi-action-plan/mahurangi-action-plan_home.cfm

Footprints protected

Footprints of Maori and their dogs preserved in ash from the Rangitoto eruption on Motutapu island have been protected by the ARC and DOC. After consultation with Ngai Tai and other Hauraki Gulf iwi the beach in front of this important heritage and geological site was replenished using cobbles from adjacent beaches to slow down the rate of erosion.

Runners aid clean up

Race entry fees from the 70,000 runners in this year's Ports of Auckland Round the Bays fun run have helped raise \$40,000 for the Waitemata Clean Up Trust.

The Trust has removed 2.2 million litres of rubbish from the Waitemata Harbour since 2002, using its 6.5 metre boat, the *Phil Warren*.

Under consultation

Future of Pest Management Project	MAFBNZ	www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/surv-mgmt/mgmt/future-project
Regional Policy Statement Review	EW	www.ew.govt.nz/Policy-and-plans/Regional-Policy-Statement/Regional-Policy-Statement-Review/
Mahurangi Action Plan	ARC	www.arc.govt.nz/environment/coastal-and-marine/mahurangi-action-plan/mahurangi-action-plan_home.cfm
Proposed Hauraki District Plan	HDC	www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz/

The Hauraki Gulf Forum is a statutory body responsible for the integrated management of the Hauraki Gulf. The Forum has representation on behalf of the Ministers of Conservation, Fisheries and Maori Affairs, Auckland Regional Council and Environment Waikato, ten local authorities (Rodney, Franklin, Waikato, Hauraki, Thames Coromandel and Matamata Piako District Councils, North Shore, Waitakere, Auckland and Manukau City Councils), plus six representatives of the tangata whenua of the Hauraki Gulf and its islands.

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Photo credits: ARC, Great Barrier Airlines, TCDC, Reg Nichol



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