



# Hauraki Gulf Forum

## Tikapa Moana

### **Hauraki Gulf value not sufficiently recognised**

Auckland and Waikato political leaders have called for better accounting of the services provided by the environment, following the release of a state of the Hauraki Gulf report today.

Hauraki District Mayor John Tregidga, who chairs the Hauraki Gulf Forum, said international studies show the benefit of maintaining healthy environments outweighs short term economic use by five to one.

“Yet, our latest state of the environment report shows most environmental indicators on either negative trends or remaining at levels which are indicative of poor environmental conditions.”

Auckland Councillor Chris Fletcher, the Deputy Chair of the Hauraki Gulf Forum, said “The economic value from the Leigh marine reserve, the thousands of boaties and fishers out on the Gulf each weekend, and the community-led restoration of islands like Tiritiri Matangi and Motutapu, show there are great returns from enhancement, an abundance of marine life and uncluttered natural space.”

The report notes that:

- Current fisheries management rules keep stocks of fish such as snapper and crayfish well below natural levels. Having about three quarters of potential fish numbers missing from the system, particularly large individuals, has altered other plant and animal life around the Gulf. Fishing methods, particularly bottom trawling used in 30-40 percent of commercial catch, are likely to cause substantial reductions in species and habitat diversity.
- Toxic metals and organic contaminants are causing localised effects in Auckland estuaries and a number of metal contaminants also exceed sediment guidelines in the southern Firth of Thames.
- The Waihou and Piako rivers dominate nutrient loads to the Gulf with 70 percent originating from diffuse agricultural sources. The 1 percent per annum increase in nitrogen in rivers is consistent with increasing dairy cow numbers and uses of fertiliser and supplementary feeds.

- Muddy sediment rates are above natural levels and related changes in marine communities have been detected in several north Auckland estuaries.
- Mangrove expansion and other habitat changes are implicated in the decline of about half of the most common wading birds of the southern Firth of Thames.
- Endangered Bryde's whales may be in decline due to vessel strike and entanglement in mussel farm spat lines.
- A large amount of plastic litter continues to enter the coastal environment, with long term persistence in the environment and effects on wildlife and aesthetics.

The report also notes encouraging signs; improving water clarity from better regulation and management of sediment run-off, declining trends in nutrients in Auckland Rivers and a rebuild of kahawai stocks.

It identifies the need for clear water quality targets, expanded green and blue protected areas, an eco-system research focus, enhanced fisheries, and partnerships with tangata whenua.

Auckland Mayor Len Brown and Waikato regional Council Chairman Peter Buckley backed calls for greater investment in protection and enhancement of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

**Notes for editors:**

The Hauraki Gulf Forum – a joint committee of the Auckland and Waikato councils, government departments and tangata whenua—reports three-yearly on the state of the Gulf environment, the degree of integrated management, and the responses of agencies to priority issues.

Media are invited to attend the official launch of the 2011 Hauraki Gulf State of the Environment Report in the Auditorium Foyer, Auckland Museum at 3.30 pm, Tuesday August 9 and to attend the State of our Gulf Seminar from 10 am- 3pm. Register at <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/?t=1380>.

The Hauraki State of the Environment Report will be available from Tuesday afternoon online at: <http://www.arc.govt.nz/environment/coastal-and-marine/hauraki-gulf-forum/hauraki-gulf-state-of-the-environment-report.cfm>

**For more information contact:**

Mayor John Tregidga. Phone 021 2480227

Cr Christine Fletcher. Phone 027 27270013

Hauraki Gulf Forum manager Tim Higham. [tim.higham@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:tim.higham@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz). Phone 021 1758560.