

AT A GLANCE

# Revitalising the Gulf

Government action on the Sea Change Plan



Māori Bay Coast Walk. Photo credit Brendan Bombaci.

**Government Strategy in response to the Sea Change –  
Tai Timu Tai Pari – Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan**

June 2021



Pakiri Beach. The shellfish shuffle. Photo credit @New Zealand Story.

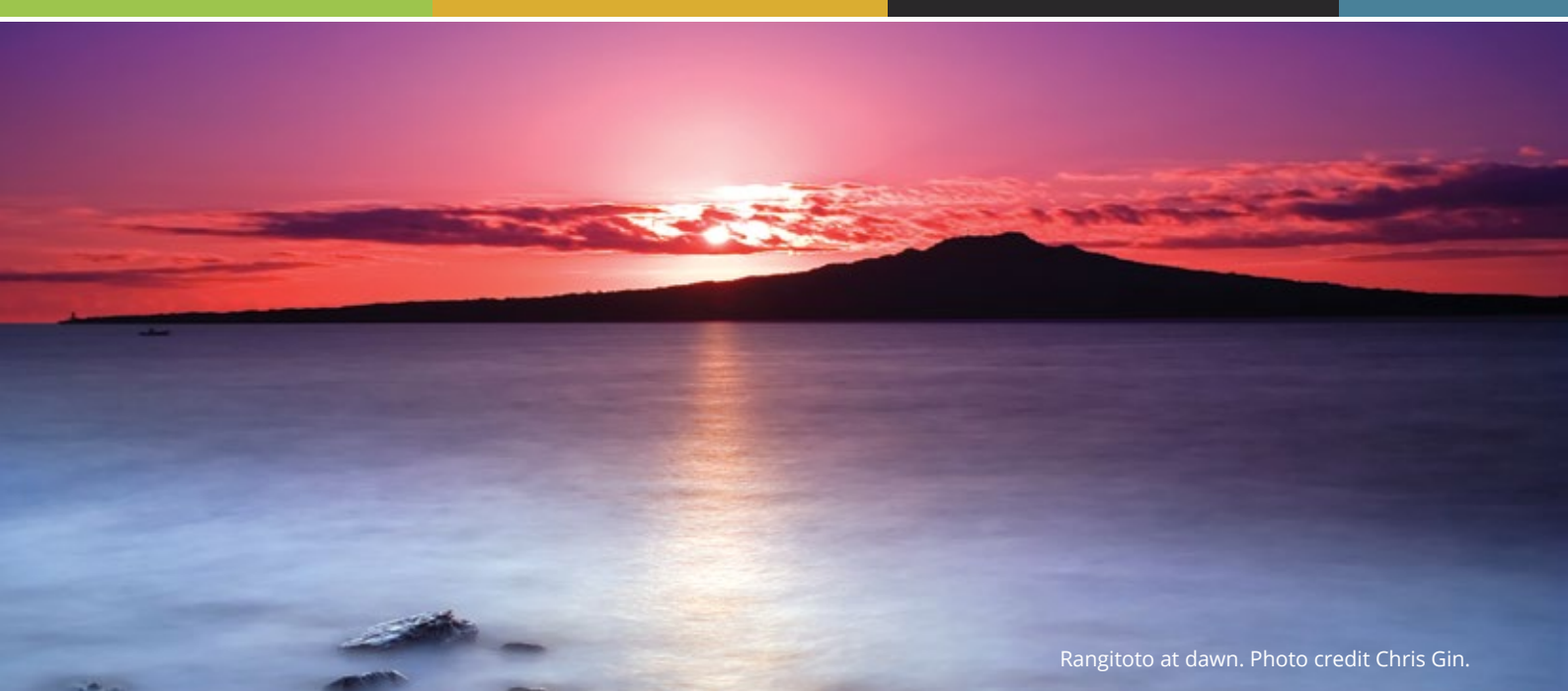
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Whanganui A-Hei (Cathedral Cove) Marine Reserve. Photo credit Alan Cressler.





Rangitoto at dawn. Photo credit Chris Gin.

## Ministers' foreword

The protection of Aotearoa New Zealand's unique natural environment is a deeply held value of New Zealanders. Sadly, one of the country's most valued and intensively used coastal spaces, the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park / Tikapa Moana / Te Moananui-ā-Toi (the Gulf), is in environmental decline. Action is needed now to revive this precious taonga.

Published in 2017, the Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari – Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan (the Sea Change Plan) set a transformational path for the future of the Gulf. We are committed to working with mana whenua,<sup>1</sup> communities and local government to achieve its vision.

A Government Strategy has been prepared in response to the marine proposals in the Sea Change Plan, with actions to drive change and deliver a healthier Gulf.

To support the recovery of species and habitats, we propose new marine protected areas in some of the most biodiverse regions in the Gulf, and complementary sustainable fisheries management measures, including harvesting controls and restrictions on trawling.

We will also promote targeted habitat restoration, a sustainable aquaculture industry, biosecurity programmes, and protected species management. These measures will complement other government initiatives, including to reduce land-based sources of sediment and other contaminants currently polluting the Gulf. This integrated response will mirror the interconnected ecosystem of the Gulf.

Treaty partnership is critical to the restoration of the Gulf. Ongoing Treaty settlement processes and customary practices will be respected in implementing the Strategy's actions. We will also work with mana whenua and local

communities to trial localised management approaches to fisheries and conservation through Ahu Moana pilots.

We thank the Stakeholder Working Group for developing the Sea Change Plan. We thank the independent Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari Ministerial Advisory Committee for the advice that was instrumental in shaping the Strategy. We also thank mana whenua, stakeholders and interest groups for their feedback on the Strategy.

We acknowledge the contributions of other Ministers in progressing Sea Change over many years and across governments – including Conservation Ministers Hon Kiritapu Allan and Hon Eugenie Sage, Fisheries Minister Hon Stuart Nash, and their predecessors. We also acknowledge the work of officials from the Department of Conservation and the Ministry for Primary Industries/ Fisheries New Zealand in preparing the Strategy.

The Government is committed to turning the tide on the declining health of the Gulf. We believe this Strategy sets out the necessary actions to restore the waiora and mauri (health and life force) of this precious taonga (treasure), and to ensure New Zealanders can enjoy one of the world's most beautiful marine environments for generations to come.

Hon David Parker  
**Minister for Oceans and Fisheries**

Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall  
**Acting Minister of Conservation**

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<sup>1</sup>An iwi or hapū who exercise customary authority in an identified area.

# A call to action for the Gulf

Mai te rangi ki te papa  
Ngā maunga ki te Moana  
Tīkapa Moana – Te Moananui ā Toi  
Ngā poitō o te kupenga  
Nei rā te mihi ka tika  
Hei whakaruruhau taonga  
Taitimu, Taipari  
Wai ora, Mauri ora  
Ki uta, ki tai  
Ki te whai ao, ki te ao mārama

From the Skyfather to the Earthmother  
From the mountains to the sea  
The sea of Tīkapa – The great ocean of Toi  
The floats of the net  
We greet you  
A shelter for our treasures  
The ebbing tide, the high tide  
Healthy waters, life force  
To the shores, to the sea  
To the world, to the world of understanding

The Hauraki Gulf Marine Park / Tīkapa Moana / Te Moananui-ā-Toi (the Gulf) is one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most valued and intensively used coastal spaces. Its mana (prestige) is embodied in its blue waters, forested islands, fertile catchments and extraordinary diversity of life, including its people.

**The Gulf is badly degraded from human activities. Some fish and seabird populations are declining, and nature's delicate balance is being upset.**

This has severe knock-on effects for other species and habitats. Extractive activities at sea, and activities on land that introduce sediment and pollutants, are also damaging marine and coastal environments.

In response to this decline, the Sea Change Stakeholder Working Group developed the *2017 Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari – Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan* (the Sea Change Plan). This includes over 180 recommendations to improve the waiora (health) and mauri (life force) of the Gulf from the land to its freshwater systems and down to the sea.

This Strategy is the Government's response to the Sea Change Plan's marine proposals, including fisheries management, marine protection, habitat restoration and localised management.

**An integrated package of actions capable of addressing multiple pressures on the Gulf is critical to ensure successful restoration and protection.**

The Government, regional councils and community groups are undertaking significant work programmes to progress the Sea Change Plan's broader aspirations for the Gulf across land and freshwater. The Strategy complements these work programmes by addressing direct threats to the marine environment in the Gulf.

# What we want to achieve

Our goal is to deliver a healthier Gulf. To do this, we have set two overarching outcomes for the Strategy.

## Overarching outcomes

### The Strategy seeks:

- effective kaitiakitanga and guardianship in the Gulf; and
- healthy functioning ecosystems that:
  - underpin the wellbeing and prosperity of people who live, work and play in the Gulf;
  - sustain healthy fisheries that replenish and enhance the pātaka kai (food basket) for customary, recreational and commercial uses;
  - regulate, support and sustain the Gulf; and
  - support resilient and diverse habitats and marine life.

These outcomes reinforce the four concepts embedded in the Sea Change Plan: kaitiakitanga (guardianship), mahinga kai, pātaka kai (replenishing the food basket), ki uta ki tai (mountains to sea) and kotahitanga (prosperous communities).

In delivering these outcomes, we will respect the integrity and value of current and future Treaty settlements.

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## Elements of the Strategy

The Strategy's actions span eight important elements:

**1. Fisheries management:** developing an area-based fisheries plan for customary, commercial and recreational fisheries, to progress over 50 integrated actions. This will be completed by June 2022. The actions recognise that, although most fish stocks are in a better state than 30 years ago, sustainability issues remain for some stocks, particularly at a local scale. The Fisheries Plan proposes management measures that include:

- removing trawl fishing, except within limited areas or "trawl corridors"
- freezing the footprint of commercial scallop dredging to existing areas and excluding recreational scallop dredging
- restoring fisheries abundance at the stock level and within the Gulf through management strategies to address localised depletion
- enabling more intertidal harvesting controls, such as blanket seasonal closures
- supporting greater mana whenua and regional participation in fisheries management.

The Fisheries Plan will be supported by a multi-stakeholder Hauraki Gulf Fisheries Plan Advisory Group.

**2. Active habitat restoration:** establishing a habitat restoration framework to guide new investment and restoration initiatives, to be completed in 2021.

**3. Aquaculture:** identifying government actions to remove impediments to aquaculture initiatives by 2023.

**4. Marine biosecurity:** continuing agency support for the Top of the North Marine Biosecurity Partnership<sup>2</sup>.

**5. Marine protection:** establishing 11 new High Protection Areas to protect and restore marine ecosystems, 5 Seafloor Protection Areas to protect seafloor habitats and communities, and 2 areas of marine protection adjacent to existing marine reserves.

High Protection Areas will include a provision for customary practices that recognise the role of mana whenua as rangatira and kaitiaki. These areas will be progressed through new legislation in 2024.

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<sup>2</sup> Auckland Council, Bay of Plenty, Northland and Waikato Regional Councils and MPI are working together to stop the spread of invasive marine pests in northern New Zealand.

Together, these 18 protected areas will increase the area under marine protection in the Gulf from 6.6 percent (including the existing cable protection zone) to 17.6 percent.

**6. Protected species:** expanding the existing work by the Department of Conservation (DOC) and Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)/Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) for protected marine species in the Gulf over the next three years, including mitigating terrestrial biosecurity threats to burrow-nesting seabirds on island refuges, improving by-catch measures, and prioritising research and monitoring of protected species.

**7. Ahu Moana (local marine management by mana whenua and local communities):** initiating pilot projects in 2021 to identify how to improve fisheries

and conservation in local areas. The pilots will explore mana whenua and local community ambitions, and how best DOC and MPI/FNZ can support them.

Existing fisheries regulatory tools will support the pilots. Lessons from the pilots will inform the development of an Ahu Moana framework by 2023.

**8. Governance:** establishing a cross-agency implementation group comprising DOC and MPI/FNZ to oversee the implementation of the Strategy. Determining a wider new governance arrangement in the Gulf is out of scope of the Strategy<sup>3</sup> because future Treaty negotiations relating to the Gulf will focus on governance arrangements (including the Hauraki Gulf Forum).

Implementation of the Strategy's actions will begin immediately. Some actions will be accomplished within a few months, while others will be staggered over the next three years. This is because they require formal processes, such as public consultation on the proposed protected areas and Hauraki Gulf Fisheries Plan.

We will undertake research and ongoing monitoring to track progress and adapt our approach over time, to ensure it remains effective in delivering these actions.

**We will work alongside mana whenua to ensure our actions recognise te ao Māori (interconnectedness and inter-relationship of all living and non-living things) and draw on mātauranga Māori.**

People are integral to the Strategy's success. They depend on a healthy ecosystem for spiritual, cultural and economic wellbeing but also have wide-ranging, and sometimes conflicting, values and uses for the ecosystem.

Some of the Strategy's actions therefore focus on managing the impact of human activities on habitats and species to protect the values people have for their local areas.

The actions also provide for ongoing enhancement of, and access to, kaimoana for customary, commercial and recreational use.

We will support and work alongside mana whenua, stakeholders, and local communities to restore the Gulf. We also recognise that mana whenua and local communities are kaitiaki and guardians of the Gulf and want to be involved in how their local areas are managed.



<sup>3</sup> Strategy engagement identified governance options for the Hauraki Gulf which have been noted in the Strategy. This may inform future Treaty settlement negotiations.



# Effective kaitiakitanga and guardianship



Governance



Ahu Moana



Marine Biosecurity



Aquaculture



Protected Species



Fisheries Management



Habitat Restoration



Marine Protection

# Healthy functioning ecosystems





## Fisheries management

### The Strategy's outcomes for fisheries management in the Gulf include:

- locally abundant fish stocks;
- ecologically important habitats protected and restored;
- strengthened fisheries management through local input; and
- improved understanding of stocks, fisheries and ecosystems within the Gulf.

The Hauraki Gulf's proximity to the largest population centre in the country means there is heavy pressure on the Gulf relative to the wider fisheries management area (FMA) 1 within which it sits. This pressure justifies a new approach to fisheries management within the Gulf: an area-based plan authorised under section 11A of the Fisheries Act 1996<sup>4</sup>.

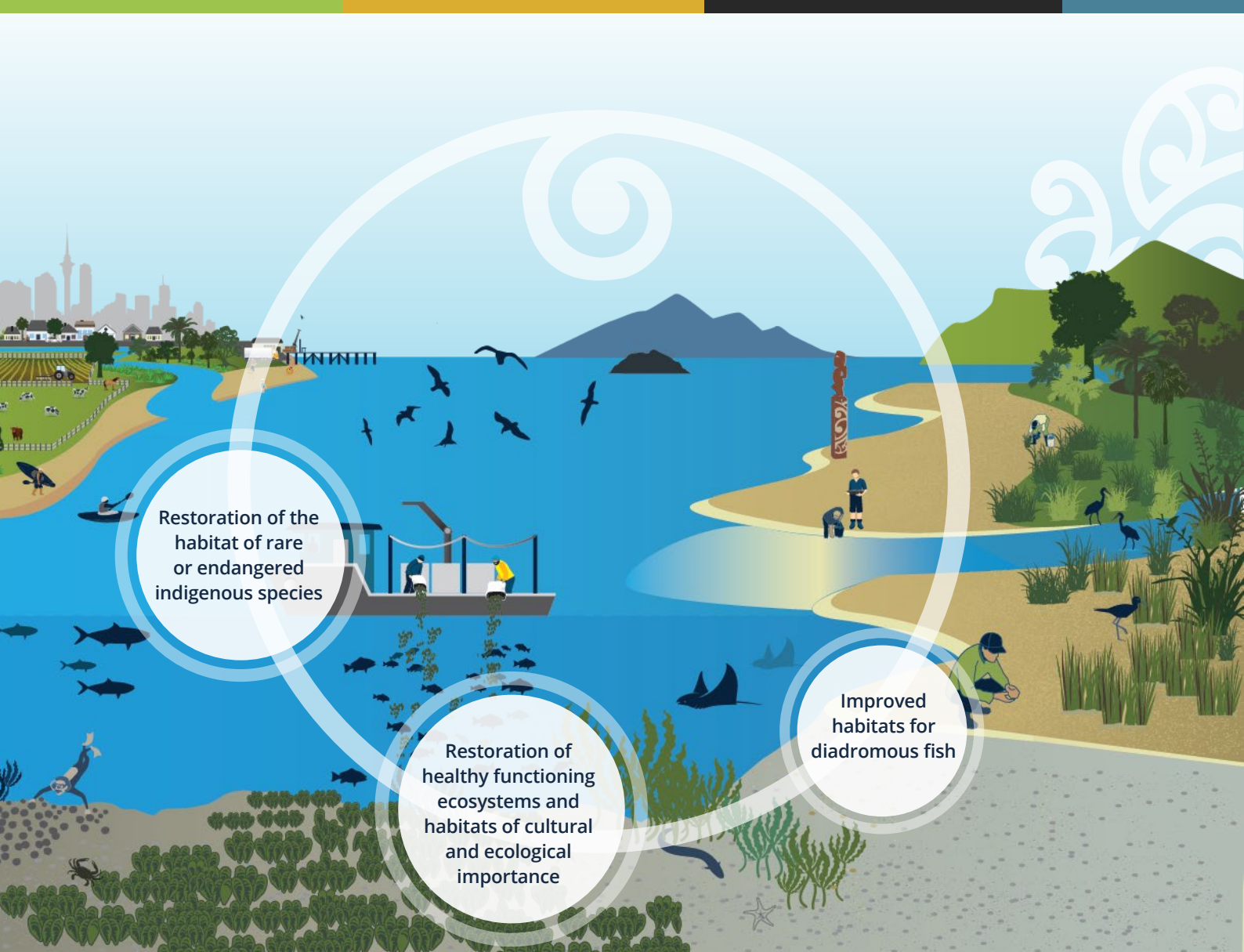
### To deliver the above outcomes we will:

- develop and implement a first of its kind, area-based Hauraki Gulf Fisheries Plan with actions for fisheries management that will be reviewed every five years;

- establish a multi-stakeholder Hauraki Gulf Fisheries Plan Advisory Group to collaboratively support the finalisation of the Fisheries Plan and monitor its implementation, as well as identify issues and collate advice for MPI/FNZ on fisheries management issues and priorities in the Gulf on an ongoing basis; and
- determine fisheries resource indicators to measure implementation of the Fisheries Plan and evaluate its impact (these indicators will form part of the overarching Gulf Research, Monitoring and Reporting Framework).

Approving a fisheries plan under section 11A of the Fisheries Act requires a statutory consultation process. Further engagement with mana whenua and key stakeholders on the draft Fisheries Plan will help address concerns before public consultation. Following public consultation and any necessary changes to the Plan, FNZ will seek Ministerial approval of the Plan.

<sup>4</sup> A fisheries plan, approved under section 11A of the Fisheries Act 1996, can set fisheries management objectives for one or more fish stocks, fishing years or areas, or any combination of these. It will enable fisheries management to focus on addressing localised resource issues, while maintaining continuity of broader fisheries management processes, and will work alongside iwi fisheries forum plans to collectively achieve the aspirations of mana whenua in the Gulf.



Restoration of the habitat of rare or endangered indigenous species

Restoration of healthy functioning ecosystems and habitats of cultural and ecological importance

Improved habitats for diadromous fish

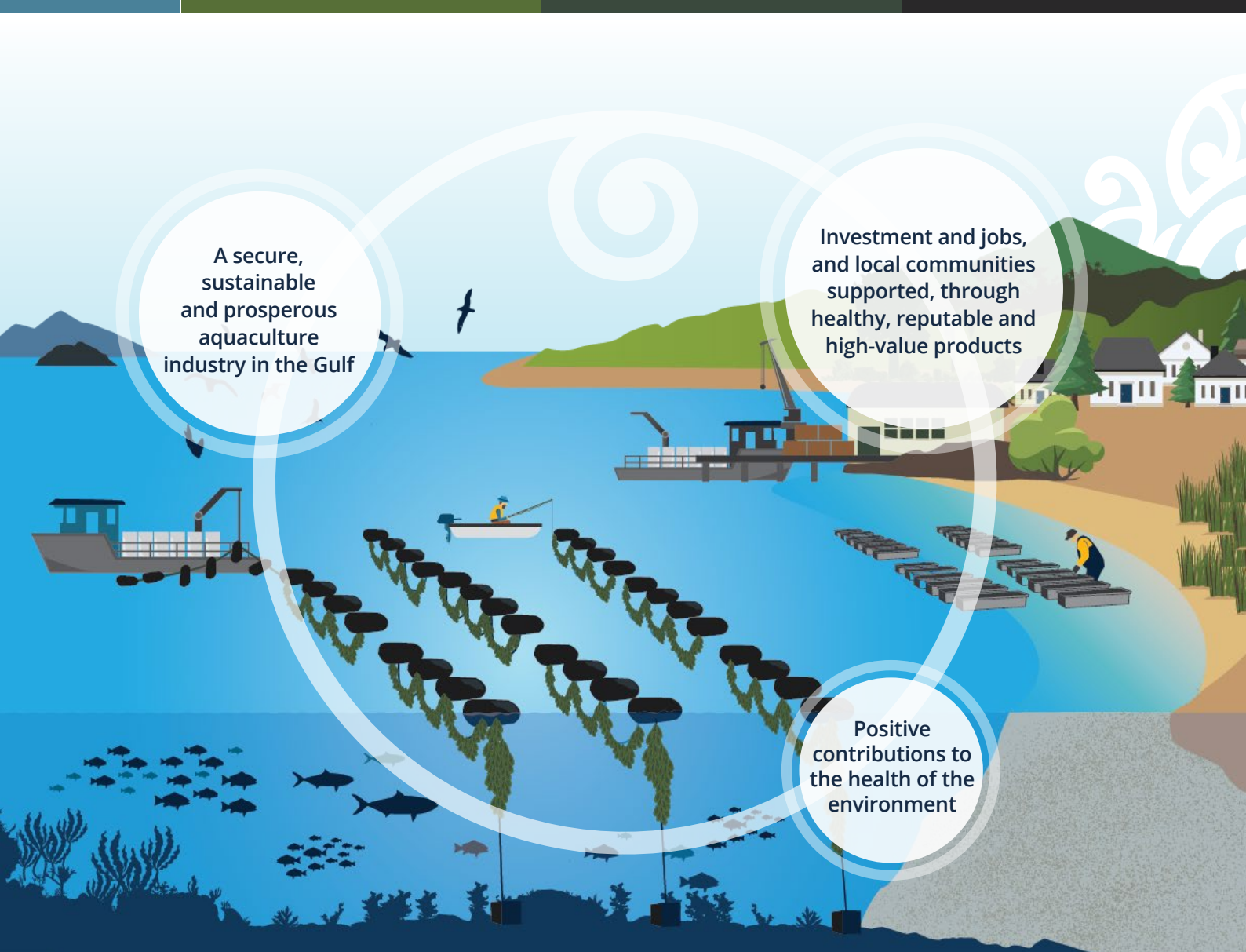
## Active habitat restoration

**The Strategy outcomes for active habitat restoration in the Gulf are:**

- restoration of healthy functioning ecosystems and habitats of cultural and ecological importance;
- improved habitats for diadromous fish (migratory between saltwater and freshwater), including the mitigation or removal of barriers to migration; and
- restoration of the habitat of rare or endangered indigenous species.

**To deliver the above outcomes, we will:**

- develop a habitat restoration guidance framework that will:
  - examine and report on habitat losses, the ecosystem services lost within those habitats, and the potential for active habitat restoration in the Gulf;
  - drive restoration priorities specific to the Gulf;
  - offer practical tools to guide active restoration projects; and
  - reduce regulatory barriers to restoration projects.



A secure, sustainable and prosperous aquaculture industry in the Gulf

Investment and jobs, and local communities supported, through healthy, reputable and high-value products

Positive contributions to the health of the environment

## Aquaculture

### The Strategy's outcomes for aquaculture in the Gulf are:

- a secure, sustainable and prosperous aquaculture industry in the Gulf;
- investment and jobs, and local communities supported, through healthy, reputable and high-value products; and
- positive contributions to the health of the environment.

### To deliver the above outcomes, we will:

- work with Auckland Council and Waikato Regional Council to address any central government barriers that are hindering progress;
- support aquaculture infrastructure, research and innovation initiatives in the Gulf that contribute to the Strategy's outcomes for aquaculture, including opportunities for restorative aquaculture; and
- promote increased Māori participation and support mana whenua aspirations in the Gulf's aquaculture industry.





Mediterranean fanworm (*Sabella spallanzanii*) marine pest in Auckland. Photo credit Crispin Middleton.

## Marine biosecurity

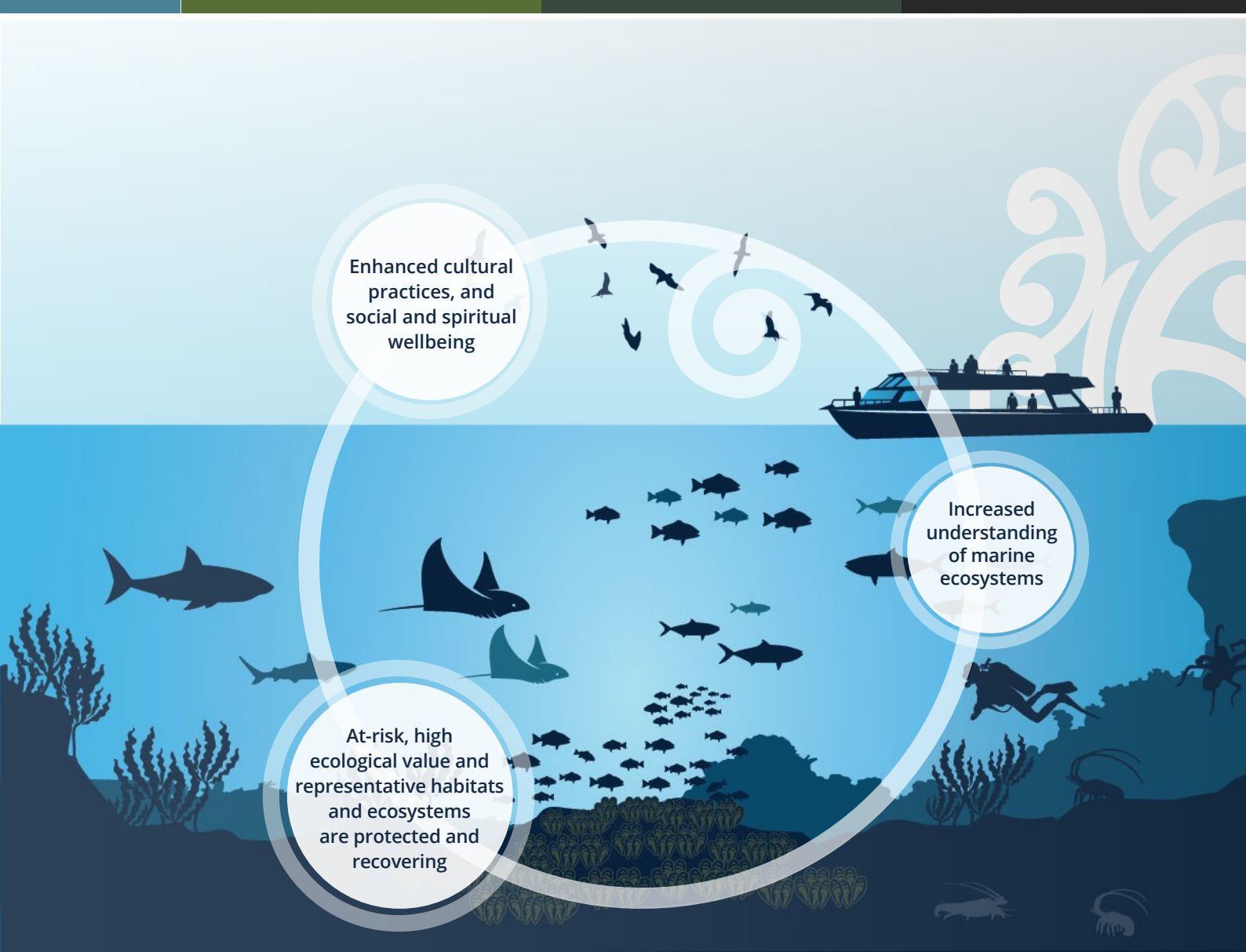
### The Strategy's outcome for marine biosecurity in the Gulf is:

- management and mitigation of non-indigenous marine species and diseases through prevention, early detection, eradication, population suppression and prevention of secondary spread.

### To facilitate this, we will:

- continue to support and co-ordinate activities with the Top of the North Marine Biosecurity Partnership, in particular, prioritising:
  - development and delivery of its inter-regional marine pest pathways management plan;
  - development of a framework and strategy to support a more nationally co-ordinated approach to marine biosecurity; and
- support to progress the development of a vessel database as an important implementation tool for the inter-regional pathway plan with national benefits;
- provide national co-ordination for marine biosecurity activities;
- maximise use of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment-funded Marine Biosecurity Toolbox (\$10.4 million over five years); and
- maintain border controls and marine surveillance programmes at ports of first arrival.





## Marine protection

### The Strategy outcomes for marine protection in the Gulf are:

- protection of at-risk, high ecological value and representative habitats and ecosystems in the Gulf to support their recovery;
- increased understanding of marine ecosystems within the Gulf, and the pressures on them, to support holistic management; and
- restoration of the Gulf's healthy marine environment to enhance cultural practices and social and spiritual wellbeing.

### To deliver the above outcomes, we will:

- establish 11 new High Protection Areas and 5 Seafloor Protection Areas (Figure 1);
- establish 2 additional marine protection areas adjacent to existing no-take marine reserves (Figure 1); and

- work with mana whenua to define the provision for customary practices in High Protection Areas;
- undertake public consultation on the marine protection proposals;
- provide for customary practices in High Protection Areas when drafting the legislation required to implement the new protection tools;
- ensure that the protected area proposals complement the management actions under the Hauraki Gulf Fisheries Plan to boost the local abundance of fish; and
- work with mana whenua, communities and regional and local management agencies to:
  - implement a marine protection monitoring and reporting programme that will form part of the Strategy's Monitoring and Reporting Framework; and
  - identify priority research needs.

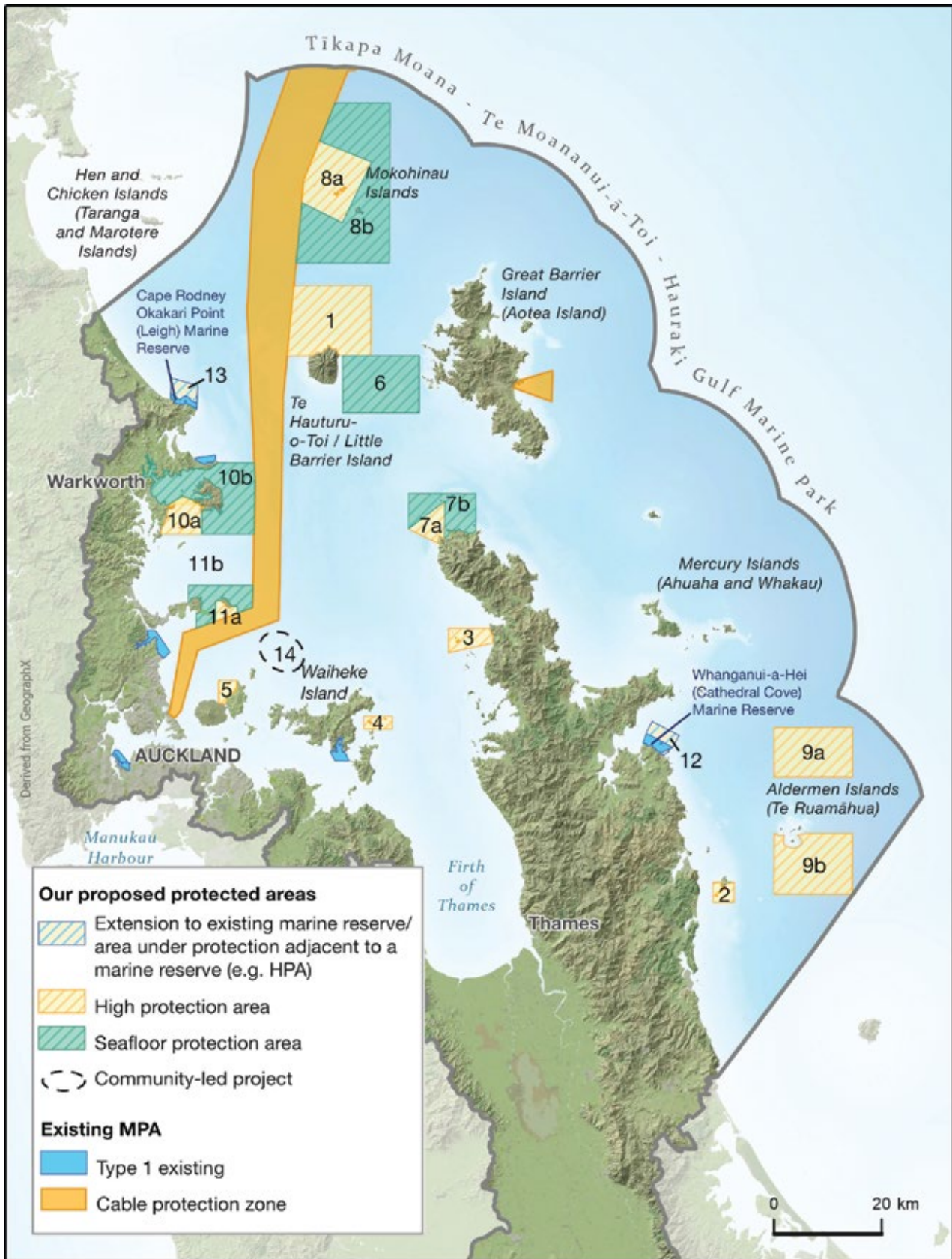
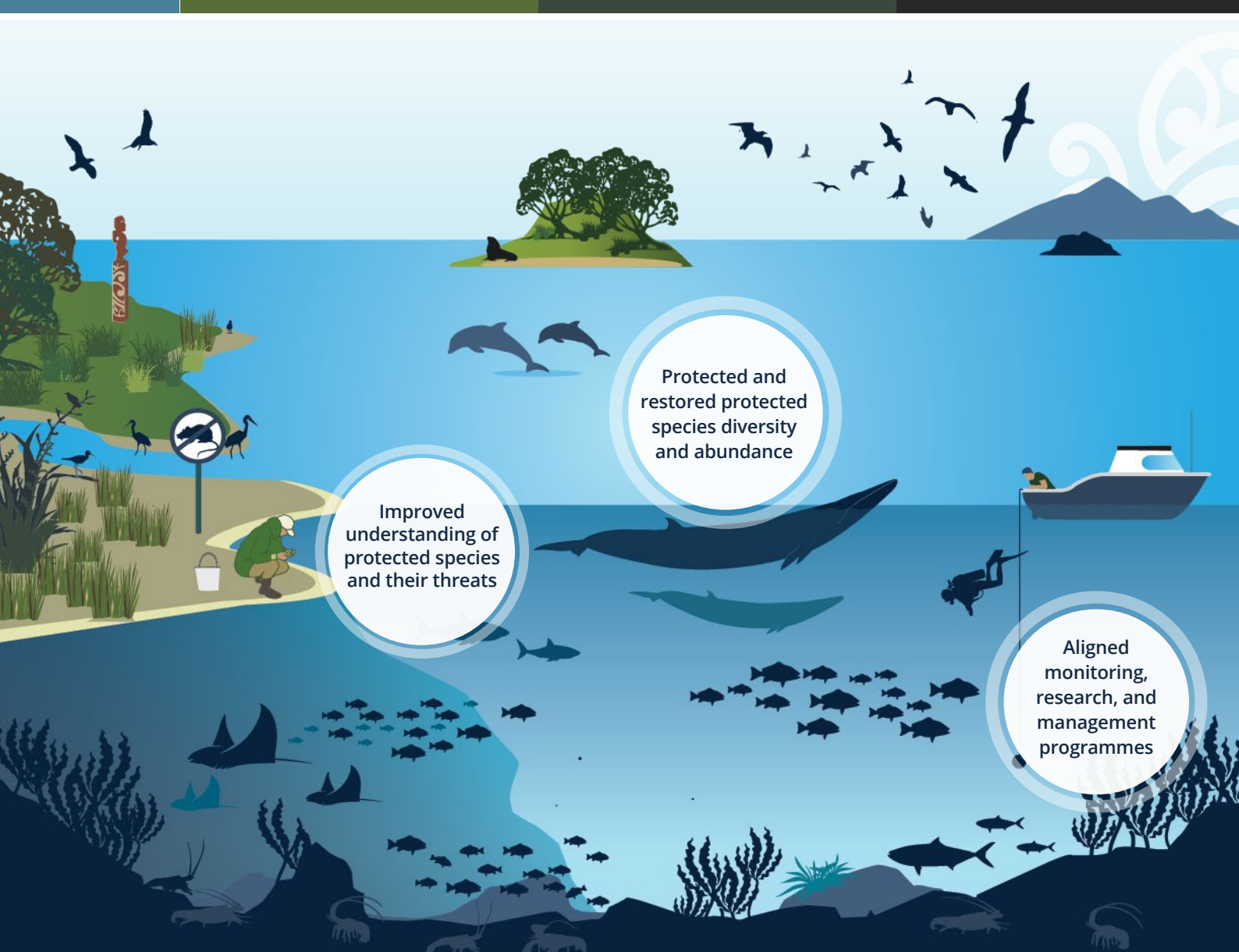


Figure 1: Locations of the protected area proposals that we will engage and consult on.



## Protected species

**The Strategy outcomes for protected species in the Gulf are:**

- protected and restored protected species diversity and abundance;
- aligned monitoring, research and management programmes; and
- improved understanding of protected species and their threats.

**To deliver the above outcomes, we will support mana whenua and councils to deliver important initiatives for protected species. We will also:**

- complete a review of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Mammals Tourism Site Plan;
- refresh the Auckland Island Biosecurity Plan;
- build a process to engage with recreational fishers to gather bycatch information;

- agree priority research questions, including black petrel monitoring, through the Conservation Services Programme;
- engage with recreational fishers and relevant agencies to explore recreational fisheries bycatch mitigation options;
- consider whether any further actions are needed to reduce the threat posed by the RMS Niagara shipwreck to wildlife;
- improve observation (direct or electronic) of commercial fisheries and bycatch mitigation technologies;
- align island biosecurity plans across the Gulf; and
- conduct the first review of the effectiveness of the Strategy's actions, identify gaps in management and adopt new priority actions where necessary.





## Ahu Moana

### The Strategy outcomes for Ahu Moana are:

- effective kaitiakitanga (mana whenua) and guardianship (local communities), with local management of nearshore coastal areas and decision-making drawing on the knowledge and connection of mana whenua and local communities; and
- observation of positive environmental and fisheries changes in locally managed nearshore coastal areas.

### To deliver the above outcomes, we will:

- work with mana whenua, local communities and others with a role in local area management, to identify collaborative management principles that will help deliver local outcomes;
- identify, through implementation of Ahu Moana pilot projects, what is needed from central government to facilitate and support local initiatives and build that into our way of working; and
- work with iwi to review and improve existing statutory customary fisheries tools and their supporting processes.





## Governance

The Strategy identifies options to improve governance arrangements in the Gulf. These options are to restructure the Hauraki Gulf Forum or create a new governance entity that includes one or more of the following:

- it has the statutory authority to lead and drive ecosystem-based initiatives;
- it is based on a model of co-governance with mana whenua; and/or
- it is smaller and more cohesive than the existing Forum, with representation based on those best placed to strategically drive and achieve the desired outcomes.

Progression of these options is not within the scope of this Strategy.

**To ensure the Strategy is implemented successfully, we will:**

- establish a Cross-Agency Implementation Group comprising DOC and MPI/FNZ to oversee the implementation of the Strategy.



An underwater scientist at work: Photo credit Vincent Zintzen.

## Research, monitoring and reporting

### The Strategy's outcomes for research, monitoring and reporting in the Gulf are:

- tracking the effectiveness of the Strategy's interventions to inform and direct future actions, in line with our adaptive management approach;
- collaboration with mana whenua on mātauranga Māori, supporting its inclusion and appropriate use;
- alignment with existing research and monitoring programmes in the Gulf and more widely, with Māori and stakeholder input; and
- findings are reported regularly to the Cross-Agency Implementation Group, including recommendations to inform adaptive management and regular refreshes of the Strategy.

### To achieve these outcomes, we will:

- develop a monitoring and reporting framework in collaboration with mana whenua and stakeholders;
- facilitate the development of a Gulf research plan, building on the research priorities and prioritisation criteria identified in the Sea Change Plan;
- establish a research and monitoring advisory group to facilitate and oversee research, monitoring and evaluation activities in the Gulf, and to report and make recommendations to the Cross-Agency Implementation Group; and
- increase the availability and accessibility of research and monitoring data.





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