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20 March 2022

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#### **Proposed Hākaimango-Matiatia (Northwest Waiheke Island) Marine Reserve**

##### **Introduction**

1. This is a submission on the proposed Hākaimango-Matiatia (Northwest Waiheke Island) Marine Reserve (herein described as “proposed marine reserve”).
2. The Environmental Defence Society (**EDS**) is an independent not-for-profit organisation conducting interdisciplinary policy research and litigation. It was established in 1971 with the purpose of improving environmental outcomes in Aotearoa New Zealand. EDS has a special interest coastal and marine ecosystems and is currently leading research on future options for oceans system reform.
3. The Hauraki Gulf has been a core focus of EDS’s prior research projects. In 2019, EDS published a report outlining potential options for improving the governance of the Hauraki Gulf.<sup>1</sup> That report was informed by a review of international literature; reports commissioned by the Hauraki Gulf Forum; and lessons from the Sea Change Tai Taimu Tai Pari marine spatial plan for the Gulf. More recently, EDS submitted in support of iwi-led proposals to temporarily close the waters around Waiheke Island, in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, to protect and restore populations of taonga species and their important role in marine ecosystems.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peart R and Cox B *Governance of the Hauraki Gulf: A review of options* (EDS, Auckland, February 2019), available from [www.eds.org.nz](http://www.eds.org.nz).

<sup>2</sup> Recent submissions prepared by EDS are available from [www.eds.org.nz](http://www.eds.org.nz).

## Summary of submission

4. EDS supports the proposed Hākaimango-Matiatia (Northwest Waiheke Island) Marine Reserve and commends the Friends of the Hauraki Gulf Society (**FHG**) for taking action to protect the health and mauri of the marine environment around Waiheke Island.
5. As human-induced pressures on the Gulf continue to increase and threaten its future, the proposed marine reserve provides an opportunity to protect the important natural values that remain. The proposed site hosts a range of biogenic habitats with high ecological values, including sponge gardens, kelp forests and scallop beds; and distinct geological features including marine fossil beds with historic and scientific values that are of national significance.
6. Marine reserves are not only beneficial for marine life, they also provide enhanced opportunities for recreation, tourism and educational activities and generate economic benefits for local communities. The proximity of the proposed marine reserve to the largest urban centre in Aotearoa New Zealand will make it easier for people to access and enjoy the reserve; and there is strong support from the local community for the proposal.
7. The proposed marine reserve will complement the recent actions of local iwi to protect and restore populations of taonga species in the waters around Waiheke Island; and it will fill a gap in the proposed marine protected area network that is set to (eventually) be implemented within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.
8. There is an urgent need to strengthen existing marine protection to sustain the life-supporting capacity of the marine environment within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. A mere 0.3% (or 3,960ha) of the Gulf is currently protected from direct human-induced pressures within marine reserves. The proposed marine reserve will increase the total area of marine reserves by 60% (2,350ha) and expand the range of natural features that are afforded protection.
9. EDS requests that the Minister approve and implement the proposed marine reserve without delay; and take action to improve the long-term management of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park by establishing a network of marine protected areas in accordance with the recommendations of the Sea Change Plan.

## The proposal

10. On 23 April 2021, the Friends of the Hauraki Gulf Society (**FHG**) notified the Director-General of Conservation (**Director-General**) of their intention to apply for an Order in Council to establish a new marine reserve under s 5 of the Marine Reserves Act 1971 (**the Act**). The FHG application was subsequently accepted by the Director-General for consideration and publicly notified on 20 January 2022.
11. The FHG application proposes to establish a marine reserve in the coastal and marine area off the Northwest coast of Waiheke Island. The proposed marine reserve is bound by Matiatia Point on the west coast and Hākaimango Point on the north coast. The landward margin of the proposed reserve is defined by the mean water high springs line and the seaward margin is approximately 5 km offshore. The total area of the marine reserve is approximately 2350 ha and it is located entirely within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.
12. This submission considers the FHG proposal within the relevant legislative context, which includes the Act and the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000 (**HGMPA**).

## Legislative context

### *Marine Reserves Act 1971*

13. The Act creates a framework for the establishment of marine reserves in Aotearoa New Zealand. The long title indicates that marine reserves are to be created “*for the purpose of preserving them in their natural state as the habitat of marine life for scientific study*”.<sup>3</sup>
14. The general purpose of the Act is to preserve areas that “*contain underwater scenery, natural features, or marine life, of such distinctive quality, or so typical, beautiful or unique, that their continued preservation is in the national interest*”.<sup>4</sup> The term “*marine life*” is defined broadly to include any species of plant or animal that inhabits the sea or foreshore during its life cycle.<sup>5</sup> No definition of “*habitat*” is provided in the Act.
15. Marine reserves established under the Act afford areas with a high level of protection. Section 3(2) of the Act sets out principles that are to be applied to the management of marine reserves, which include:
  - marine reserves “*shall be preserved as far as possible in their natural state*”;<sup>6</sup>
  - marine life within reserves is to be “*protected and preserved*” as far as possible;<sup>7</sup> and
  - the value of marine reserves as the natural habitat of marine life is to be “*maintained*” as far as possible.<sup>8</sup>
16. The principles also provide for public access, but only to the extent it does not undermine the preservation of marine life or the general welfare of marine reserves.<sup>9</sup> The taking or disturbance of marine materials (living or dead) is generally inconsistent with the purposes of marine reserves, and s 3(3) of the Act creates a *prima facie* prohibition on fishing within reserves.
17. Under s 5(9) of the Act, the Minister may declare an area to be a marine reserve if it will be in the “*best interests of scientific study and it will be for the benefit of the public*”.

### *Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000*

18. In making a decision on whether or not to establish the proposed marine reserve under the Act, the Minister must have particular regard to the provisions of ss 7 and 8 of the HGMPA.<sup>10</sup>
19. Section 7 recognises that the interrelationship between the Gulf, its islands, and catchments and the ability of that interrelationship to sustain the life-supporting capacity of the Gulf (which includes its waters and ecosystems)<sup>11</sup> are matters of national significance.
20. Section 8 of the HGMPA sets out management objectives for the Gulf, which include:

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<sup>3</sup> Marine Reserves Act 1972, long title.

<sup>4</sup> Marine Reserves Act 1972, s 3(1).

<sup>5</sup> Marine Reserves Act 1972, s 2(1).

<sup>6</sup> Marine Reserves Act 1972, s 3(2)(a).

<sup>7</sup> Marine Reserves Act 1972, s 3(2)(b).

<sup>8</sup> Marine Reserves Act 1972, s 3(2)(c).

<sup>9</sup> Marine Reserves Act 1972, s 3(2)(d).

<sup>10</sup> Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000, s 13.

<sup>11</sup> Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000, s 2(1).

- the protection and “where appropriate” enhancement of the life-supporting capacity of the Gulf environment;<sup>12</sup>
- the protection and “where appropriate” enhancement of the Gulf’s natural, historic and physical resources (including kaimoana) with which tangata whenua have a unique relationship;<sup>13</sup> and
- the maintenance and, where appropriate, enhancement of the contribution of the Gulf’s resources to social and economic wellbeing,<sup>14</sup> and to the recreation and enjoyment of people and communities.<sup>15</sup>

### **There is an urgent need to act to protect and enhance the marine environment of the Hauraki Gulf**

21. The state of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park is of serious concern. The latest assessment report, published by the Hauraki Gulf Forum in 2020, describes long-term declines in marine biodiversity, the depletion of taonga species and the loss of important benthic habitat.<sup>16</sup> The cumulative effects of human-induced pressures including overfishing and poorly regulated land-based activities (i.e., sedimentation and nutrient run-off) have led to widespread degradation of the marine environment and undermined the capacity of species and ecosystems to perform important functions.<sup>17</sup>
22. There are numerous examples of the alarming state of decline. The collapse of shellfish populations (including cockles, pipis, mussels, oysters and scallops) throughout the Hauraki Gulf has hindered their capacity to recover, even in the absence of fishing, and eroded their capacity to provide important water filtration services.<sup>18</sup> The overfishing of large reef predators, including rock lobster and snapper, has triggered cascading effects and led to the expansion of persistent urchin barren habitat across shallow rocky reef ecosystems.<sup>19</sup>
23. The impacts are not only ecological. It is now difficult to find, let alone harvest, many of the taonga marine species that were once abundant across shallow coastal waters of the Hauraki Gulf. The absence of rock lobsters, scallops, mussels, and pāua around Waiheke Island has impeded the continuation of customary harvest practices and led local tangata whenua to place rāhui and request urgent fisheries closures.<sup>20</sup>
24. The state of the marine environment demands urgent action. The pressures on the Hauraki Gulf are already high, but they are set to increase as the effects of climate change (i.e., ocean warming and acidification) are realised in coastal waters around Aotearoa New Zealand.<sup>21</sup>
25. To date, action toward achieving the management objectives of the HGMPA has been underwhelming at best. A mere 3,960 ha of the 1,200,000 ha area (or 0.33%) of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park is protected within marine reserves.<sup>22</sup> Only one marine reserve, the Te

<sup>12</sup> Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000, s 8(a).

<sup>13</sup> Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000, s 8(c).

<sup>14</sup> Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000, s 8(e).

<sup>15</sup> Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000, s 8(f).

<sup>16</sup> Hauraki Gulf Forum *State of our Gulf 2020: Hauraki Gulf / Tikapa Moana / Te Moananui-ā-Toi State of the Environment Report 2020* available from [www.haurakigulfforum.org.nz](http://www.haurakigulfforum.org.nz)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Hauraki Gulf Forum, above n 16.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> In January 2021, Ngāti Pāoa placed a rāhui on the harvest of scallops, mussels, rock lobsters and pāua from the nearshore marine area around Waiheke Island. In February 2022, Ngāti Manuhiri laid a rāhui over the entirety of the Hauraki Gulf to prohibit the harvesting of scallops.

<sup>21</sup> Ministry for the Environment and Stats NZ *New Zealand’s Environmental Reporting Series: Our marine environment 2019* (Wellington, 2019), at 6, available from [www.mfew.govt.nz](http://www.mfew.govt.nz) and [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz).

<sup>22</sup> Hauraki Gulf Forum, above n 17, at 39.

Matuku Marine Reserve on the south coast of Waiheke Island, was created after the inception of the Marine Park in 2000.<sup>23</sup> Although considerable effort has been directed towards developing a marine spatial plan for the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park (“the Sea Change Plan”), the Plan’s implementation has been subject to protracted delays. This is evident in the fact that the recommendations of the Sea Change Plan were published in 2017, and included the objective of creating a network of 15 marine protected areas by 2020.<sup>24</sup> We are now two years beyond that target and the marine environment of the Hauraki Gulf remains largely unprotected.

26. There is an urgent need to implement strong area-based protection to reverse the decline of marine species and habitats within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, in accordance with the management objectives of the HGMPA.

### **The benefits and values of the proposed Hākaimango-Matiatia Marine Reserve**

#### *Protection of marine life and benthic habitat*

27. “No-take” marine reserves are recognised as one of the most powerful and effective methods for protecting marine life and habitats.<sup>25</sup> They provide refuges where populations of exploited marine species can recover and habitats modified by fishing can regenerate.
28. Long-term studies at sites within marine reserves in Aotearoa New Zealand have identified the numerous ecological benefits of permanent marine protection.<sup>26</sup> The Cape Rodney to Okakari Point Marine Reserve (widely described as the “Leigh Marine Reserve”) was established in 1976. Two decades after protection, scientists had observed significant increases in the abundance and size of snapper and rock lobsters; declines in the abundance of urchins; and the expansion of kelp forest across shallow rocky reefs within the reserve.<sup>27</sup> The total area of urchin barren habitat had shrunk from 31.4% to 3.2% in the space of 20 years, which increased primary productivity within the reserve by 58%.<sup>28</sup> Studies have shown that the increase in kelp habitat supports aggregations of marine invertebrates, which in turn provide an important food source for larger fish species.<sup>29</sup>
29. The FHG application is supported by scientific assessments that describe the natural features, ecology and habitats to be protected by the marine reserve. The ecological characteristics of the proposed reserve area include:<sup>30</sup>
  - high macroalgal biodiversity;
  - high benthic invertebrate diversity (particularly in certain parts of the reserve);
  - a diversity of physical habitats (i.e., soft sediment and complex rocky reef habitats);
  - a diverse array of biogenic habitats (including macroalgal forests, sponge gardens, benthic invertebrates and bivalve beds); and

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<sup>23</sup> Hauraki Gulf Forum, above n 17, at 39.

<sup>24</sup> Seachange Stakeholder Working Group, *Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan* (April 2017), at 112 to 120.

<sup>25</sup> See Ballentine B (2014) Fifty years on: Lessons from marine reserves in New Zealand and principles for a worldwide network *Biological Conservation* 176 297-307.

<sup>26</sup> See Babcock *et al* (1999) Changes in community structure in temperate marine reserves *Mar Ecol Prog Ser* 189: 125–134; Shears NT and Babcock RC (2002) Marine reserves demonstrate top-down control of community structure on temperate reefs *Oecologia* 132, 131-142; and Shears N T and Babcock RC (2003) Continuing trophic cascade effects after 25 years of no-take marine reserve protection. *Mar Ecol Prog Ser* 246: 1–16.

<sup>27</sup> Babcock *et al*, above n 23, at 131.

<sup>28</sup> Babcock *et al*, above n 23, at 131.

<sup>29</sup> Ballentine B (2014) Fifty years on: Lessons from marine reserves in New Zealand and principles for a worldwide network *Biological Conservation* 176 297-307.

<sup>30</sup> Haggitt T (2016) *Ecological survey of Waiheke Island north-west coastline: Prepared for Auckland Council and Hauraki Gulf Conservation Trust*, at 41, available from [www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz).

- negligible urchin barren habitat and high macroalgal cover on shallow rocky reefs.
30. It is notable that some small scallop beds were recorded within the proposed marine reserve area.<sup>31</sup> The latest stock assessments for scallop fisheries located within the Hauraki Gulf suggest the stocks are on the verge of widespread and persistent collapse.<sup>32</sup> The biomass of commercially important scallop beds declined from 1,005 tonnes in 2012 to 52 tonnes in 2021.<sup>33</sup> Any remaining scallop beds within the Hauraki Gulf are a rarity that deserve the highest form of protection. Their presence within the proposed reserve area must be recognised as a unique and special natural feature in the context of widespread depletion.
  31. The presence of dense macroalgal forests across shallow rocky reef habitat is also a positive indicator of a healthy marine ecosystem in the context of the wider Northeastern coastal bioregion where urchin barren habitat is rapidly expanding. The existing kelp forests will promote a quicker recovery than in adjacent areas (i.e., Endeavour Bay) where urchin barrens have already emerged. They provide an important food source and shelter for invertebrates and underpin marine food webs. Consequently, they are a prerequisite for the wider recovery of fish and other marine species.
  32. The scientific assessments indicate that are relatively low abundances of taonga marine species (i.e., snapper, kingfish, kahawai and rock lobster) along the Northwest coast of Waiheke Island. This reflects a wider trend across coastal waters around Aotearoa New Zealand. EDS considers this finding only emphasises the need to take urgent action to protect the important species and habitat that remains.

#### *Protection of significant geological features*

33. The proposed marine reserve area encompasses the coastal inlet known as “Fossil Bay” (or Double U Bay). The Bay hosts rich fossil beds which have been the subject of considerable scientific interest since their discovery in 1927.<sup>34</sup> The fossils represent Miocene deposits and are more than 20 million years old. Fossils have been collected from intertidal and shallow subtidal rocky reefs as well as from shelly gravel and inner shelf sandy seafloor habitat within the proposed reserve area.<sup>35</sup>
34. Marine fossil records are recognised as an important source of information and are used to determine the outcomes of climate-related stressors in natural systems over geological timescales.<sup>36</sup> For example, similar records have been used to inform predictions of the extinction risk of marine species under climate change.<sup>37</sup> Marine fossils are of historic and scientific significance. They are a rare and distinct feature that should be protected and preserved under the Act.

#### *Public benefits*

35. The potential benefits of marine reserves extend beyond their boundaries. Studies have shown that marine reserves can benefit adjacent fisheries through the spill over of adults and juveniles

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<sup>31</sup> Haggitt, above n 30, at 34.

<sup>32</sup> FNZ (2021) Review of Sustainability Measures for New Zealand scallops (SCA 1 & SCA CS) for 2022/23 FNZ Discussion Paper No: 2021/30, December 2021, page 10, available from [www.mpi.govt.nz](http://www.mpi.govt.nz)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Eagle M Hayward B and Grant-Mackie J (1995) *Early Miocene Beach, Rocky Shore, and Enclosed Bay Fossil Communities, Waiheke Island, Auckland Records of the Auckland Institute and Museum* 32:17-44.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Clapham M (2019) Conservation evidence from climate-related stressors in the deep-time marine fossil record *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society Biological Sciences* 374:1788 <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2019.0223>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

and the export of eggs and larvae to sites located down-current.<sup>38</sup> Increases in the size and abundance of individuals within marine reserves translates to increased reproductive potential and boosts the capacity of target fish stocks to maintain sustainable population levels.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, marine reserves can enhance opportunities for commercial and recreational fishing activities in surrounding waters.

36. Marine reserves are a tourism and recreation attraction and can provide substantial economic benefits at local and regional scales. An economic impact analysis of the Leigh Marine Reserve estimated there were 375,000 visits to the reserve in 2008, which contributed \$18.6 million into the local economy.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, the operational costs associated with managing the reserve over the same period were relatively low at \$70,000.<sup>41</sup> The FHG application represents the culmination of more than 10 years of local community consultation led by the Waiheke Local Board and there is strong support for its establishment.<sup>42</sup> The local community appears to support the potential for additional tourism and economic opportunities that might flow from the creation of the marine reserve.
37. The proposed marine reserve site is located in close proximity to Auckland City, which is the most populated city in Aotearoa New Zealand. It will provide for a range of public benefits through enhanced recreation, tourism, and educational opportunities. In addition, the potential spill over effects may enhance recreational fishing opportunities in adjacent waters and support the sustainability of local fisheries.

#### *Scientific benefits*

38. The scientific benefits of marine reserves are of critical importance moving into a period where environmental change is expected to occur at unprecedented scale, magnitude, and pace. Marine reserves provide an opportunity to study the natural processes and ecology of areas that are protected from the direct effects of fishing. Results can then be compared with findings from fished areas to provide insights on the impacts of fishing on species and the wider environment. Marine scientist Bill Ballentine aptly described the scientific merits of marine reserves as follows:<sup>43</sup>

*The scientific benefits of marine reserves proved so numerous that it became clear that marine reserves are as important to science as clean apparatus is to chemistry, and for the same reason. They are the controls for the uncontrolled experiment that is happening due to fishing and other human activities.*

39. There are currently six marine reserves located within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. Each of the individual reserves is smaller than 1,000 ha in area, and they have a combined area of 3,961 ha. Four of the marine reserves are located on the exposed coast (at Leigh, Tāwharanui, Long Bay, and Cathedral Cove), while two of the marine reserves are located in more sheltered environments (in Auckland Harbour and on the south coast of Waiheke Island).
40. The proposed Hākaimango-Matiatia Marine Reserve will enhance opportunities for scientific research by increasing the area and representation of benthic habitat that is protected. The

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<sup>38</sup> Gell FR and Roberts CM (2003) Benefits beyond boundaries: fishery effects of marine reserves *Trends in ecology & evolution*, 18(9) 448-455, available from [www.aquadocs.org](http://www.aquadocs.org).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Hunt L (2008) *Economic Impact Analysis of the Cape Rodney Okakari Point (Leigh) Marine Reserve on the Rodney District* DOC Investigation Report 4052, at 2, available from [www.howtokit.org.nz](http://www.howtokit.org.nz).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Friends of the Hauraki Gulf (2022) *Hākaimangō – Matiatia Marine Reserve (Northwest Waiheke Island) Report in support of application for an order in council for a marine reserve*, at 48 – 49, available from [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

<sup>43</sup> Ballentine B, above n 26, at 297.

proposal will increase the area of existing marine protection in the Hauraki Gulf by 60% and provide a unique opportunity to directly compare the ecological characteristics and effects of marine reserves at sheltered and exposed sites in close proximity to each other (i.e., at sites on the Northwest and Southeast coasts of Waiheke Island). This is particularly useful because it enables scientific assessments to track how different benthic communities, that have evolved in response to different prevailing environmental conditions (i.e., wave exposure), respond to environmental change. Some benthic communities are likely to tolerate future change better than others and understanding the resilience of different marine species and communities enables the development and implementation of effective management actions.

41. For reasons already indicated, the marine reserve is necessary to protect the scientific values of a nationally distinct and significant marine fossil deposit.

#### *Other benefits*

42. The proposed marine reserve will give permanent effect to existing rāhui that have been placed over the coastal waters around Waiheke Island. In 2021, Ngāti Pāoa placed a rāhui to prohibit the harvest of scallops, mussels, rock lobsters and pāua from waters within the one nautical mile limit around Waiheke Island. The rāhui was subsequently affirmed by the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries through the implementation of a temporary closure under the Fisheries Act 1996. More recently, in February 2022, Ngāti Manuhiri laid a rāhui over the entirety of the Hauraki Gulf to protect scallop beds from the impacts of fishing. The proposed marine reserve recognises the concerns of iwi and complements their efforts by creating a permanent marine protected area to protect taonga from further decline. The proposed marine reserve directly aligns with the management objectives of the HGMPA, which seek to ensure that important historic resources (including kaimoana) of significance to tangata whenua are protected.
43. The proposed marine reserve will also complement the eventual implementation of the Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari Project. A key recommendation of the Sea Change Plan was the establishment of a network of 15 Marine Protected Areas (MPA) by 2020. The proposed MPA network did not include any sites in the coastal waters around Waiheke Island and Aotea – Great Barrier Island because there had been limited opportunities for community consultation on the proposals.<sup>44</sup> A specific management action was included in the Sea Change Plan to ensure island communities were consulted, and gaps in the MPA network filled, during its implementation.<sup>45</sup>
44. The Government Strategy on implementing the recommendations of the Sea Change Plan was released in June 2021.<sup>46</sup> It proposes to establish 14 new areas for marine protection in the Hauraki Gulf.<sup>47</sup> No marine protected areas are proposed for the waters around Waiheke Island. The proposed marine reserve will therefore address a gap in the future MPA network proposed for the wider Hauraki Gulf. It will also complement a community-led project that is being developed for the Noises Islands, directly to the north of the proposed marine reserve site.

#### **Conclusion**

45. The proposed marine reserve will offer necessary protection to unique marine life, important biogenic habitats, and natural features that are of historic and scientific significance. It will

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<sup>44</sup> Sea Change Stakeholder Working Group, above n 24, at 114.

<sup>45</sup> Sea Change Stakeholder Working Group, above n 24, at 114 (Management Action 6).

<sup>46</sup> DOC, FNZ and MPI (2021) *Revitalising the Gulf: Government action on the Sea Change Plan*, available from [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, at 62.

strengthen the resilience of marine ecosystems to increasing human-induced pressures and recognise there is an urgent need to protect and enhance the life-supporting capacity of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

46. The proposal will add a new site to the existing network of marine reserves within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park and increase the total area of marine reserves by 60%. The increased coverage of marine reserves has important scientific benefits. It provides for greater representation of marine species and habitats, allowing studies to investigate ecological change in the absence of direct human-induced stressors (i.e., fishing). It also enhances the potential for scientists to undertake replicate studies at a range of sites and enables local influences to be identified and investigated. Through monitoring, scientists will be able to investigate the recovery of the Hauraki Gulf and to test the effectiveness of marine protected areas. The proposed marine reserve encompasses marine fossil beds that are an important tool for understanding how marine species will respond to future environmental change. It is essential that the scientific values within the proposed reserve are protected.
47. The proposal has strong support of the local community and will complement recent actions taken by iwi to protect and restore taonga marine species within shallow coastal waters around Waiheke Island. Past experience indicates that marine reserves provide a range of social benefits through enhanced recreation, tourism and education opportunities, and associated economic benefits.
48. EDS considers the proposal is in the best interests of science and it will be for the benefit of the public. Consequently, the proposal is consistent with the requirements of the Act and should be created without delay. The proposal will better achieve the management objectives of the HGMPA by recognising there is a pressing need to act to protect and enhance the life-supporting capacity of the marine environment of the Hauraki Gulf.