

**GREENPEACE**NEW ZEALAND
Underwater
ASSOCIATION

Hon Rachel Brooking
Minister for Oceans and Fisheries
Parliament Buildings, Wellington

28th August 2023

Re: Decision to allow bottom trawling and scallop dredging to continue in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park

Tēnā koe Minister Brooking,

The Hauraki Gulf Alliance represents hundreds of thousands of members of the public who are deeply concerned about the state of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park/Tikapa Moana, and in particular the continuation of bottom trawling, scallop dredging and Danish seining in these treasured waters.

We appreciated your comments to the 2023 Seafood Industry Conference where you stated “take a look at the State of Our Gulf report published last Friday – it’s a frank and somewhat frightening analysis of what’s happening to one of the most beautiful and productive waterways in the world. Reading it, it is easy to understand why many members of the public think bottom-trawling in the Hauraki Gulf and beyond should be banned.”

We are here for the Hauraki Gulf and a healthy ocean and those New Zealanders who you recognise want an end to bottom trawling in the Hauraki Gulf. The “Revitalising the Gulf” plan was the ideal opportunity to regulate meaningful change, and address the ongoing collapse of marine ecosystems within Park waters. We are disappointed this did not happen. We believe you have failed to make the most of this opportunity and urge you to ban all mobile, bottom contact fishing methods in the entire Marine Park.

We are frustrated by having been presented with a plan whose outcomes were pre-determined from the start. There was never a real intent to ban damaging bulk harvesting methods, as ministers didn’t allow it. We are concerned that the commercial fishing industry has trumped the people’s rights to have a healthy, vibrant environment.



Bottom trawling has consistently resulted in the removal of crucial seafloor habitats, including centuries-old sponges and corals. Moreover, bulk-harvest trawling, Danish seining and dredging captures/crushes everything in front of these archaic devices, causing high mortality rates and waste on a scale that would be unacceptable on land. A healthy ocean floor is essential for the restoration of abundance and biodiversity in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, and continuing to permit these methods undermines these goals.

The ominous threat of the invasive seaweed *Caulerpa* only makes a prohibition more urgent. Bottom-contact fishing methods could vastly accelerate the spread of the pest. There is a statutory obligation on Ministers to make appropriate responses to threats like *Caulerpa* in the Biosecurity Act 1993. Ignoring this threat could lead to long-term damage to the Gulf's ecosystems. The response to date has been inadequate.

However, with the introduction of the Hauraki Gulf Fisheries Plan you have been presented with a unique opportunity to remove destructive fishing methods from one of our most valuable and vulnerable marine areas.

Lee Fish's success shows it is possible to long-line in Park waters rather than trawl it, resulting in a dramatically more sustainable and higher-value fishery. Japan successfully farms over 400,000 tonnes of scallops annually, for both local consumption and high-value export. To secure a viable future for finfish, scallops and other species it is imperative to transition to lower-impact fishing techniques and innovative technologies.

Moreover, you are not obliged to seek a 'balance' between economic and environmental concerns. It is a fallacy in this context because returns of an intact Hauraki Gulf (around \$5 billion per annum according to NZIER) vastly outweigh the public benefit of tax revenue from destructive fishing methods. And, the Courts have already ruled that there is no balancing act required, a precautionary approach is the bottom line.

Minister, we implore you to adopt a precautionary approach because we are at a critical juncture. Please don't dismiss the pressures of invasive species, human impact and evidence of ocean warming and the impact this will have on ocean health. The people of New Zealand will support decisive leadership.

It is time to ban bottom trawling, scallop dredging and Danish seining from the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, New Zealand's only national park of the sea. No other action will stand up to the test of science, good governance or indeed public scrutiny.



haurakigulfalliance.nz

We understand that you will shortly be consulting on a proposal for trawl and Danish seining fishing zones, please include the option of no permitted zones within the Gulf as part of the consultation process.

Please let us know how we can help.

Yours sincerely,

The Hauraki Gulf Alliance

info@haurakigulfalliance.co.nz

