



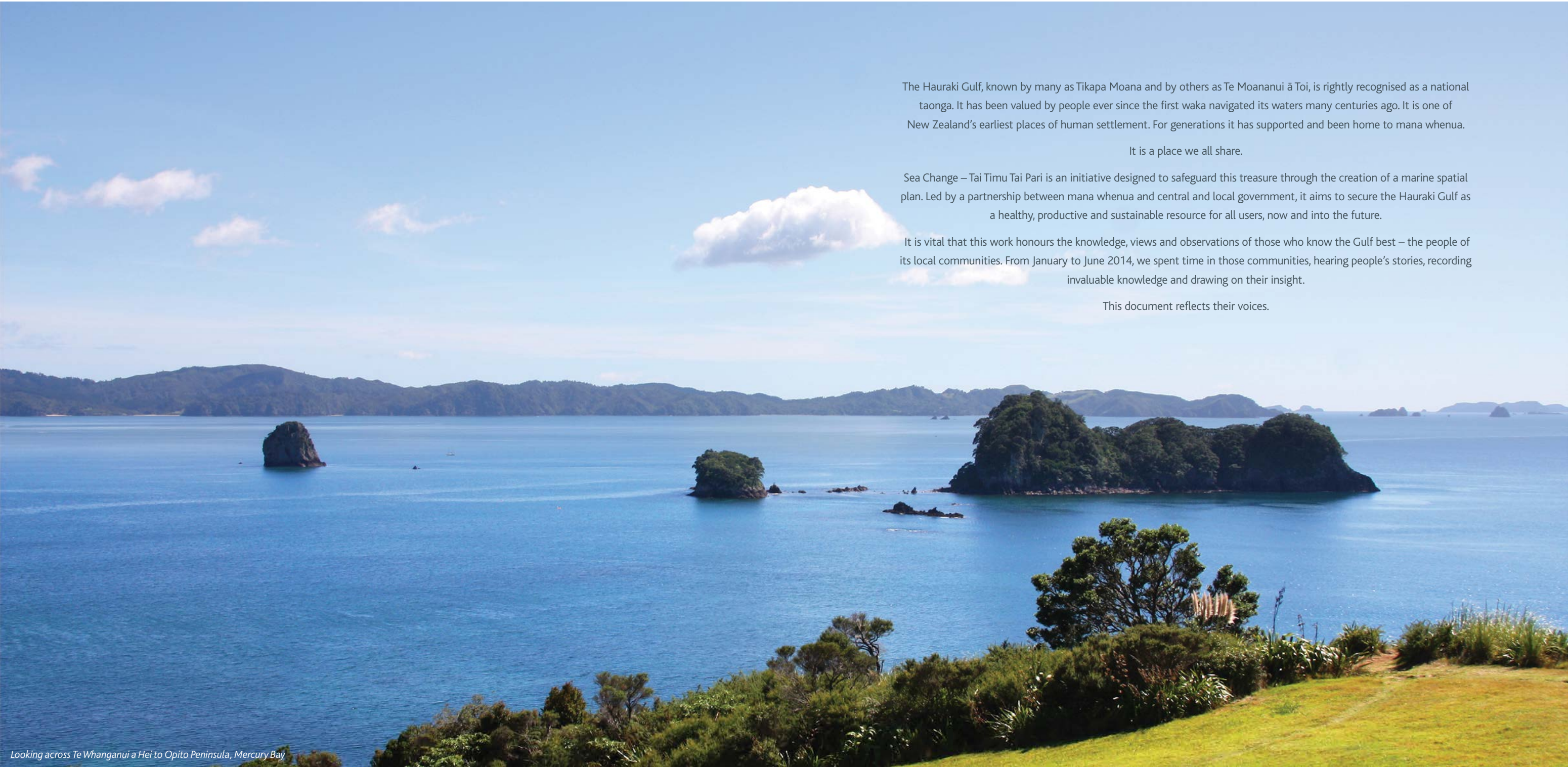
Sea change

Tai Timu Tai Pari

Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan

The Voices of the Hauraki Gulf

Summary of the Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari Listening Posts
January-June 2014



The Hauraki Gulf, known by many as Tikapa Moana and by others as Te Moananui ā Toi, is rightly recognised as a national taonga. It has been valued by people ever since the first waka navigated its waters many centuries ago. It is one of New Zealand's earliest places of human settlement. For generations it has supported and been home to mana whenua.

It is a place we all share.

Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari is an initiative designed to safeguard this treasure through the creation of a marine spatial plan. Led by a partnership between mana whenua and central and local government, it aims to secure the Hauraki Gulf as a healthy, productive and sustainable resource for all users, now and into the future.

It is vital that this work honours the knowledge, views and observations of those who know the Gulf best – the people of its local communities. From January to June 2014, we spent time in those communities, hearing people's stories, recording invaluable knowledge and drawing on their insight.

This document reflects their voices.

LISTENING POSTS

From January to June 2014, the Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari team held 25 group discussions, or Listening Posts, up and down the coast, on islands, and in catchments of the Hauraki Gulf area. These included more than 250 participants from a diverse range of backgrounds including those for whom the Gulf is their home, where they fish, go boating, where they work in fishing, shipping, aquaculture or tourism. It is where they have grown up, where their families and whānau have deep roots, and where their grandchildren will continue to enjoy the Gulf in the future.

Listening Posts were held in: Whangateau, Mahurangi/Snells and Algies Bay, Red Beach and Whangaparaoa, Orewa/Waiwera, the Bays, Kaipatiki, Hobsonville, St Mary's Bay, Takapuna/Devonport, Point England/Panmure, Maraetai, Kawau Island, Whitianga/Mercury Bay, Ngatea, Kaiaua, Upper Waihou, Waiheke, Tairua, Thames, Great Barrier Island, Hamilton, Whangamata and Coromandel.

Each person was asked to share their connection with the Gulf, their memories and impressions of the Gulf; what they remember it was like in the past, how they think it has evolved today, and what their wishes are for its future. They were asked to tell us what the Gulf means to them, what is important to them and what concerns they have about the care and development of this coastal space. People shared their knowledge and we aimed to capture their voices in their own words.

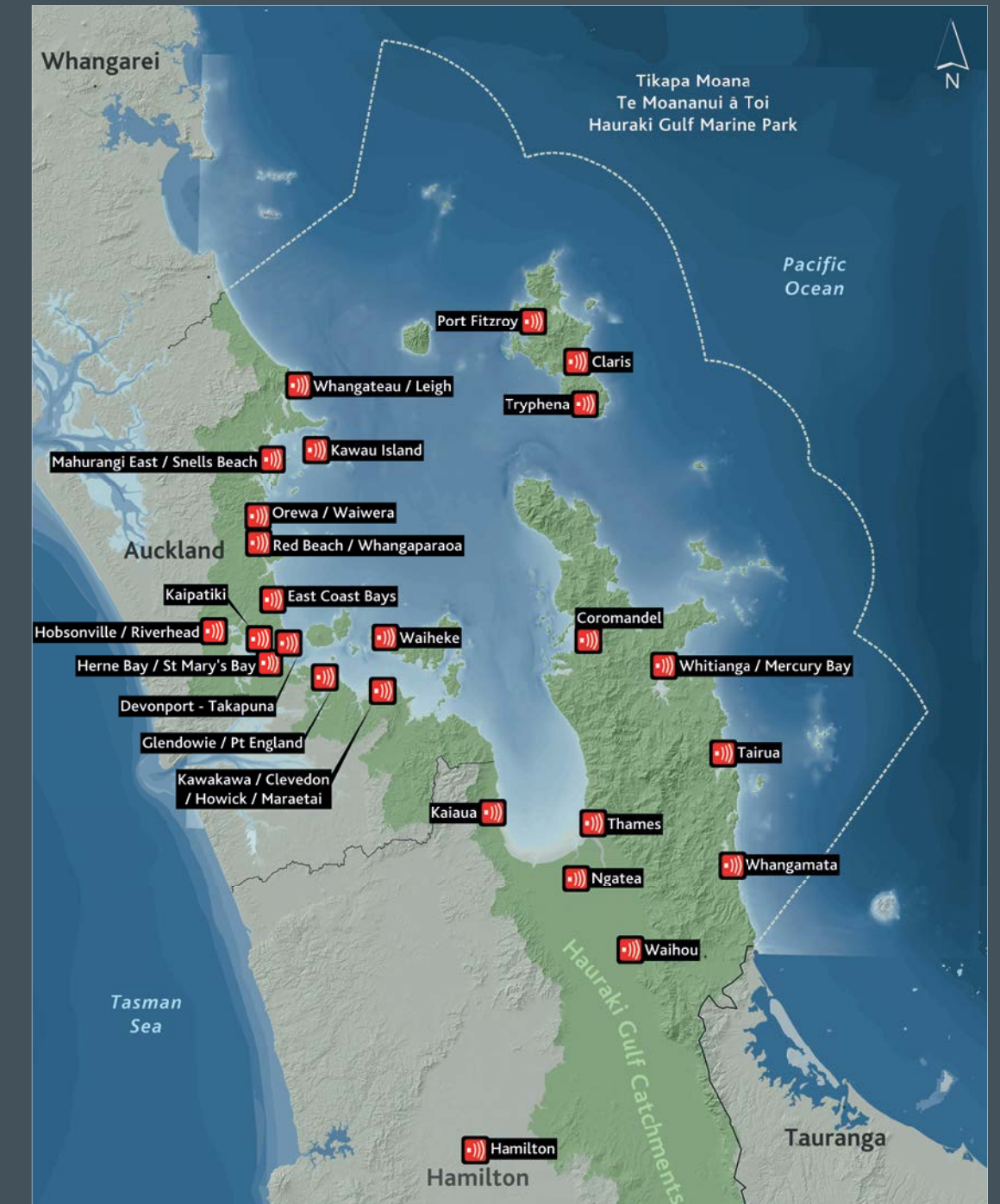


Looking towards Rangitoto from a North Shore beach



Whangamata

LISTENING POST LOCATIONS





SIX BIG THEMES

The Hauraki Gulf is a place we experience personally, and a place we experience together. Throughout the Listening Post conversations, six main themes emerged around our shared experience of the Gulf.

1 WE ARE BLESSED

The general consensus is that we are lucky to have the Gulf at our doorstep. It is a world-class asset that offers gifts of dramatic beauty, a great place to bring up children and an abundance of natural flora and fauna. We are free to be able to make use of the Gulf in our everyday lives, whether it be to earn a living, to play, or to simply be.

“We’re really lucky. I went to Spain and there were all these marinas and all they could do was go out to sea. It made me appreciate all the different places you can go around the Hauraki Gulf, the bays, the islands and everything.”

– Kaipatiki

“When we came out here in ‘64 it was rather like going to the moon. The beauty of it was that you could walk to the bottom of the road and have a beach to yourself.”

– Takapuna

2 THE GULF IS A CORE PART OF OUR IDENTITY

“We’re a coastal people, our life is linked to contact with the ocean. Muck with this and you are mucking with the core value of being a New Zealander” – Kaiaua

The Hauraki Gulf is a central feature in the character of the wider area. It provides a collection of iconic features such as Rangitoto, Great Barrier, the Firth of Thames, eastern Coromandel beaches and the Waitemata that define the physical environment.

At a local level it is comprised of a rich mosaic of specific places, tributaries, nooks and niches that create unique local experiences and shape the identity of local communities. Running past Ngataringa Bay in the evening, a swim at Onetangi, catching a feed out by the Merc’s or Rakino, gathering kai at Opoutere, and walking the dog around Westhaven are all potent examples that conjure feelings of ‘place’ that provide depth and cultural texture to the broader scope of living around the Gulf.

Although common across all Listening Posts this sense of local identity is especially vivid in some of the more remote places such as Kawau Island, Great Barrier and some Coromandel communities where there are very strong streaks of independence and a desire to preserve the integrity of the coastal, local way.

“It was hard work for local fishermen. They cared about the environment. They had their own rules: a gentleman’s agreement. We fished our own boundaries. Quota broke all this up.”

– Great Barrier

At a more intimate level the many places of the Gulf provide a rich palette for people to draw from and define themselves culturally, spiritually and personally.

“We went floundering, eeling, swimming and boating. There were pipis and cockles at Mission Bay.” – Hobsonville

“I remember jumping off the jetty at Okahu Bay and being thrilled exploring secret places.” – St Mary’s Bay



Young sailors at Narrowneck Beach

“I grew up here. The only rule was to be home when the evening lights came on. We biked everywhere, fished in the estuary, gathered kai moana. We went whitebaiting and yachting with my mother. We had parents who didn’t mind the boys being out in the Gulf. It was a more relaxed time. I have teenagers, but we seem to live in a different world.” – Orewa/Waiwera

“Recreation is a word, but it’s about life being worth living, it’s about values.” – Kaiaua

3 THE HAURAKI GULF IS A METAPHOR FOR LIFE

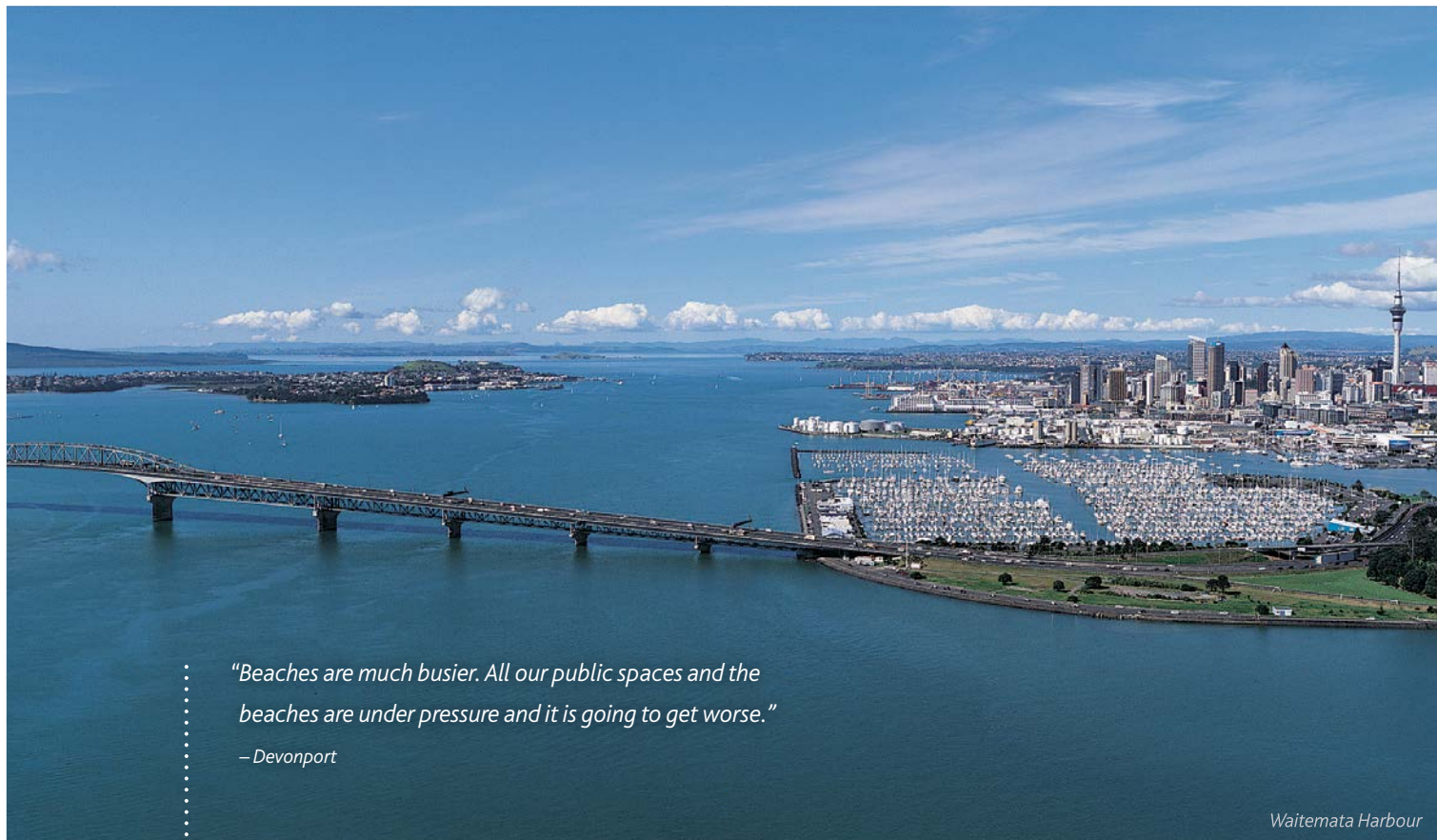
The Hauraki Gulf provides a clear reflection of the lives of its people. It symbolises the freedom to live as you choose. It marks the tracks of where people grew up. It is the setting for grand adventures and personal legends. And it provides an emotional link of shared experiences with family and friends, as well as providing memories of those no longer alive.

The Gulf is a learning ground for life skills. It teaches us the laws of nature and the impact we have on the environment. It also teaches us how to cope with adversity and survive in the elements.

4 THE HEALTH OF THE GULF IS IN A STATE OF FLUX

Each Listening Post painted a picture of the Gulf in a state of constant change; a lot for the better, but also a lot for the worse. The pressures of population growth, pollution and the changing ways of life and industry are all having an impact on the ecology of the Gulf.

Of particular concern is the rapid growth and continued coastal growth and population pressures. There is a clear sense that the Gulf needs protecting from urban impacts. This is not a desire to stop people enjoying use of the Gulf, it is more a plea for people to respect the environment and local communities.



“Beaches are much busier. All our public spaces and the beaches are under pressure and it is going to get worse.”

– Devonport

Waitemata Harbour

5 THE WELLBEING OF THE GULF AND PEOPLE’S WELLBEING ARE INTERTWINED

There is a very clear link in people’s minds between the environmental health of the Gulf and the wellbeing of those who make use of it. The quality and quantity of fish and other seafood is directly linked to water pollution levels. Similarly, the ability of children to safely swim at beaches and in rivers around the Gulf is influenced by how clean the seashore and waterways are. The vulnerability of the environment mirrors a fear for the vulnerability of our grandchildren and their children beyond.

At a spiritual level, there is also a relationship between people’s sense of happiness and wellbeing that is directly influenced by the environmental quality of the Gulf. Seeing pollution, or experiencing harm to the environment worries people. There is a sense of loss.

“The Waihou and Piako rivers are not so good. Effluent needs to be controlled. We have to do this for our kids.” – Thames



Looking over Miranda to the Firth of Thames

At an economic level there is also a concern for the ability for people to continue to earn a living through the Gulf. This includes the array of fishing, tourism, transport and other industries and occupations that rely on access to the sustainable resources of the Gulf. This concern is a blend for both the ecology of the region as well as the impact of competition for resources by industrial trawlers.

“I want my mussel farming business to be sustainable both economically and environmentally.” – Thames

“At heart I’m a commercial fisherman and a conservationist. My wish would be that there are more people educated about the environment. There’s so much we don’t know but we all have our theories.” – Great Barrier



Snorkelling over a mussel farm

6 WE MUST ALL CARE FOR THE GULF

Care for the Hauraki Gulf is something that is clearly seen to be the responsibility of all – from young children, to everyday citizens, to newcomers to the area, to businesses, to government agencies and Councils. One interesting insight is that people are much more likely to take care of the environment when it is close to them in ‘their own back yard’.

This is a delicate task because there is a firm belief that people cannot control nature. Indeed, attempts to do so can lead to damaging unintended consequences. But there are many tools that can help. People agreed that science can provide knowledge, public pressure can set expectations and there is also the ability to regulate to protect vulnerable areas and resources.

“It’s the commons. Remember the tragedy of the commons where because nobody owned it, nobody looked after it. There is a lesson here for us. We need more protected areas in the next 20-30 years to give the sea time to rebalance, we have an imbalance in the ocean now.”

–Whitianga

Pipi gathering at Whangamata

MEMORIES OF THE PAST

The Listening Posts reveal a warm nostalgic view of the Gulf. It is the setting for ‘the good old days’, when life was simple and more certain, there was more freedom and fewer rules and less bureaucracy controlling us.

The Gulf of the past is associated with strong memories of family, of our personal legends and adventures and a clear sense of community. The past was relatively egalitarian. Anyone could buy a bach by the sea with a boat.

It was a time of abundance. There were fish and shellfish aplenty and you could rely on the sea and the foreshore to provide.

“The noises of summer – from seabirds, the ocean teeming with kahawai. Crack open a kina and all the fish would come. So much life, so much vibrancy.” – Whitianga

“There was a whole personal mythology around the beach. Looking out to Rangitoto you could imagine eruptions. You could imagine anemones and starfish being huge. It’s our personal identity.” – Takapuna

However, the Gulf of the past was not all a bed of roses. While fertile and plentiful, there were times of ignorance and greed. There used to be much less of a sense of care for the environment and little priority for protection.

People used to treat the foreshore as a dumping ground for rubbish. With few restrictions people used to plunder the sea both as individuals as well as on an industrial scale by trawlers.

“I remember incredible wastage of kahawai. People would head out from Matarangi to fish off the Barrier and waste them. Massive holes had to be dug in the bush to bury them (kahawai).” – Great Barrier

The prevailing view in the past was that there would always be a Gulf there to provide; its wellbeing taken for granted.



Fisherman tending to his nets on Wynyard Pier, a haunt for fishermen more than half a century before it was engulfed by reclamation work.

WHAT IT'S LIKE TODAY

Life in New Zealand has changed dramatically and quickly. People observe that everything in life seems more intense, faster, more crowded and less certain. Auckland and the Waikato, and consequently the Hauraki Gulf, are right in the vanguard of this change.

People thought the Gulf is bearing the brunt of a rapid increase and diversification of population. And there are more and more newcomers to the region who have not grown up with the Gulf in their hearts.

“There was wall to wall people down here at Christmas and when they left there was wall to wall rubbish. And it is getting worse.” – Maraetai

“I’m sick of queuing at boat ramps, so now I get the kayak out to fish.” – Hamilton

People reflected on a society that has become less egalitarian and where there has been a loss of the innocence of our past. People commented that life is ever more sophisticated in terms of technology, tastes and counting value in material terms. Past values of a sense of community and sharing are giving way to a more individualistic and money-driven New Zealand. The traditional bach by the sea and day out in the tinny have become increasingly beyond the means of everyday people.

“It (the Gulf) used to be a food bowl, and now it is more like a playground for rich people.” – Maraetai

“There is increased private ownership of moorings and property. There is less access and more exclusivity.” – Point England/Tamaki River

These changes have brought a mix of both positive and negative consequences for the Gulf.

On the positive side, there is now a stronger sense of care for the environment across society than in the past. People are generally more respectful of precious natural resources and at an individual level they are less likely to cause harm. There is also an awareness of successful efforts to create predator-free islands such as Tiritiri Matangi.

There have also been some positive gains recognised through the regulation of resources. For example, the Quota Management System has helped preserve fish stocks and throughout the Listening Posts there were examples where people noted improvements in fish numbers and water quality in places – other symptoms of the environment responding well to protection.

“Today there is a high value placed on what is untouched and pure.” – Orewa/Red Beach

“The Ohinemuri has improved a lot. They had the world trout fishing champs there. We’re catching more snapper now. The mussel farms have improved it.” – Thames

“The fish are coming back and have done so over the last 12 years so I think all the work done on water quality and the commercial quota has made a big difference.” – Point England/Tamaki River

However, the weight of opinion suggests that the Gulf is paying a heavy price from the impact of population growth and to a lesser degree changing weather patterns.

Across the Listening Posts was a strong sense of depletion. This was evidenced in the belief that the Gulf has lost much of the abundance in fish, shellfish, bird life and crayfish. And there were common references to visible signs of environmental harm such as the build up of silt and sediment, and the presence of pests and algae blooms.

“Tuna Alley we used to call the area between the Needles to the Mokohinua. But you’d be lucky to catch a yellowtail there now.” – Maraetai

“Fishermen don’t really catch anything off beaches and wharves any more.” – St Mary’s Bay

“There does not seem to be any sea life in the rock pools.” – Orewa/Red Beach

“It was shocking when new subdivisions came in and there was no silt control and that was going onto the beach.” – Mahurangi, Snells, Algies Bay

“I’ve noticed changes in the mangroves. There isn’t enough water flow. Mangroves are trapping sediment.” – Ngatea

“You used to be able to shoot 100 ducks a day, now you’d get 10 if you’re lucky. Ducks breed in drains but there’s not enough water in the drains for them to breed. So they’re not breeding so much now.” – Thames

“The drainage of the Hauraki Plains wetlands has meant we’ve removed the vital filtering system. We’ve removed the kidneys.” – Kaiaua



Kaiaua Beach

In several Listening Posts there was a sense of unease about how commercial fishing has made it harder for recreational fishers to catch their limit.

The role and track record of authorities was commonly raised in the Listening Posts. These typically took the form of encroachment over people's freedom, or the increase in bureaucracy, or the impact of authority on more isolated parts of the Gulf. There is the sense of a greater need for balance; on one hand wanting management of precious resources but also wanting to preserve individual freedoms. There was also a degree of irony in which people want authority organisations to control others but to free them.

“We want to be left alone to have autonomy on our own properties. To plant our trees and care for them without being interfered with.” – Kawau Island

"It's about managing habitat; with the Gulf it's about what's coming down the catchment. Look at the land that drains into it. It's rare through land-based exercises that someone says 'what about its impact on the Gulf or the marine environment?' The commissioners don't mention the impact. Get the land aspect right, and you'll get the rest right." – Hamilton

There is a clear feeling amongst Gulf communities that we are now at a crossroad. A point in time when the future wellbeing of the Gulf environment, and also the communities that live within it, are in the balance. It is a time when we must take action as individuals, communities, businesses and public organisations to safeguard the Gulf for future generations.

"The more we can keep our public facilities clean and looking good the more people will be proud of what we have." – St Mary's Bay

"The underlying theme for me is sustainability and not only for kai moana but for a growing population." – Maraetai



Kennedy Bay Farm, Coromandel



Fishing boat on North Wharf

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

THERE IS A JOB TO BE DONE

The Listening Posts featured a range of views about what the future holds. Some people were optimistic, while others were pessimistic. However, the great majority were convinced that there is a job to do to ensure the future sustainability of the Gulf in environment, social and economic terms.

⋮ *"I expect to drive over the Kopu and the Waihou bridges in the next 20-30 years and see a 50 percent improvement in clarity of the water, no floods, and no sediment from forestry."* – Whitianga

CONTINUING OUR LIFESTYLE

A strong theme to emerge was the idea of continuity of lifestyle. People want to be confident that future generations will be able to swim, or fish, or go boating, or to just enjoy its beauty. This is important because it reflects the close relationship between the place and the people.

⋮ *"Where we can go and what we can do here is unbelievable compared to other places around the world. My wish is that it stays that way."* – Maraetai

PRESERVING OUR IDENTITY

With this is also a desire for the preservation of identity. This is to maintain our connection with the sea, the foreshore and the array of special places and experiences that the Gulf affords. This notion was especially pronounced with more remote island Listening Posts.

IMPROVING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

There was a considerable amount of concern for the future health of the natural environment. This included the need to encourage greater diversity, to make every effort to restore fish stocks and to clean up damage causing pollution.

⋮ *"I just wish for clean water in the future – whether it's spoiled from boats or other human effects. We are taking over the planet, there are so many more of us. We just need to manage that waste so we don't stuff the ecology. This is the place where kids grow up."*
⋮ – Waiheke

MARINE PROTECTION

Beyond the responsibility for taking care there was a reasonably strong desire for some parts of the Gulf to be given greater protection. This included regulating fishing in order to encourage an increase in fish numbers and diversity.

INTELLIGENT ACTION

There was also a strong desire for public organisations like councils and the Department of Conservation to act intelligently; to dedicate resources to conducting scientific research and to develop plans that will safeguard the future of the Gulf, to better connect with and learn from local knowledge to create a sense of meaningful partnerships with local communities. People also want accountability with this. They want to know there is a plan in place and to have confidence that the Gulf is in good hands.

⋮ *"It's all about integration. There's been years of discussion, it's not about individual things it's about ecologic productivity – economic benefit without compromising life-sustaining systems."* – Kaiaua
⋮ *"I think we need some committed guardians and kaitiaki of the Gulf who are charged with ensuring the principles of the Gulf are maintained. Part of which is to explore visionary opportunities, but always in consultation. We could achieve wonderful things."* – Devonport

A ROLE FOR EVERYBODY

The responsibility for protecting the natural environment is clearly seen to be shared between us all, including everyday citizens, children, businesses, and public organisations. There is the need for guardianship, or kaitiakitanga, with people from all walks of life stepping up and making an effort to ensure the sustainability the Gulf.

⋮ *"We're all conservationists now."* – Kawau Island



THANK YOU

To the people who contributed their thoughts, views, knowledge and memories to the Listening Posts: you have our heartfelt gratitude. It has been our privilege to bring your knowledge into the Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari record. Thank you.

WHERE TO NEXT?

Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari will produce a marine spatial plan by June 2015. Throughout this process we need another key partner: you. Your ideas, visions and goals for the Hauraki Gulf – all 1.2 million ocean hectares of it – are vital if we're to secure a healthy, productive and sustainable resource for all users. Join us at www.seachange.org.nz

STAY IN THE LOOP

Help us find ways we can all share – and care for – the Hauraki Gulf now and for future generations. Please visit the Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari website to learn more and sign up for project updates.

www.seachange.org.nz



Hauraki Gulf
Marine Park
Ko te Pataka kai
o Tikapa Moana
Te Moananui a Toi

In partnership with mana whenua and the following agencies:



Hauraki Gulf Forum
Tikapa Moana
Te Moananui a Toi

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atarahai



Waikato
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaitiaki o Waikato



Auckland
Council
Te Kaitiaki o Tāmaki Makaurau