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## Hauraki Gulf marine protection area expands, but bottom trawling stays

Erin Johnson · 17:28, Aug 09 2023



ABIGAIL DOUGHERTY/STUFF

Changes to marine protection and fisheries rules for the Hauraki Gulf were announced on Wednesday. (File photo)

The Government has announced plans to increase protected areas of Auckland's Hauraki Gulf.

Two existing marine reserves will be extended, while 12 high protection areas and five seafloor protection areas will be created.

Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said on Wednesday the changes are outlined in the draft Hauraki Gulf Marine Protection Bill which will be introduced to Parliament in coming weeks.

The **new high protection areas** (HPAs) won't allow commercial or recreational fishing, but will allow for customary practices of tangata whenua.

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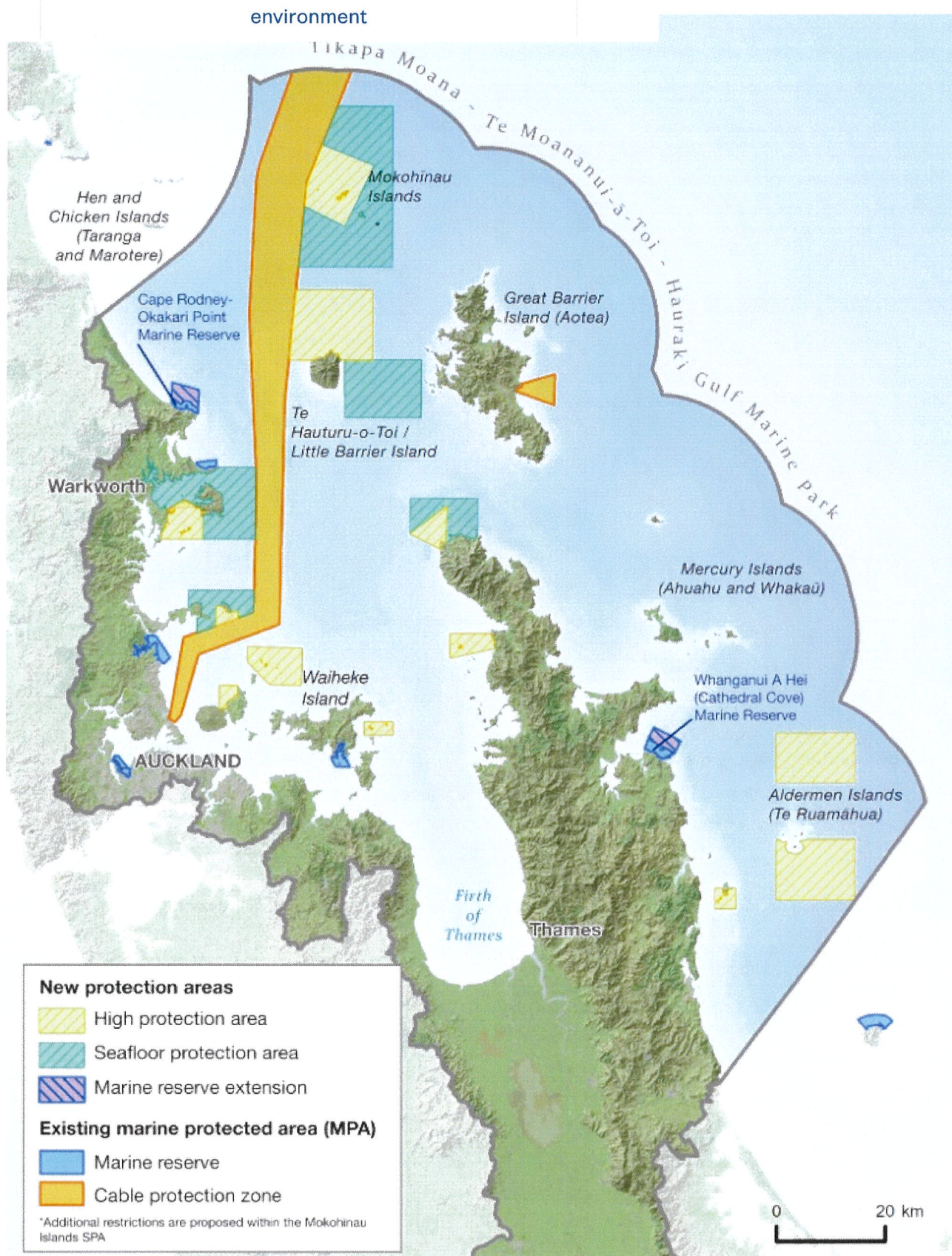
The marine reserves to be extended are Cape Rodney-Okakari Point Marine Reserve (Goat Island) and Whanganui A Hei (Cathcart Cove) Marine Reserve on the Coromandel Peninsula.

However, the changes announced do not ban bottom trawling – something conservationists have called for.

In June, the Hauraki Gulf Alliance – which includes Forest and Bird, LegaSea, WWF, New Zealand Sport Fishing and Greenpeace – presented a petition with 36,589 signatures to MPs calling for bottom trawling, scallop dredging and Danish seining to be banned from the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

Instead, the new Bill will create five new seafloor protection areas (marked with green boxes in the map below) where bottom trawling, dredging, Danish seining, dumping, sand extraction, mining and aquaculture will be banned.

Danish seining is a fishing method where a vessel sweeps the seafloor using a large net and weighted rope.



New marine protection areas to be established in the Hauraki Gulf.

Minister of Oceans and Fisheries Rachel Brooking said trawling corridors will be created.

Although details of those corridors are yet to be considered, Brooking said it will be a significant change from the current 27% of the gulf where bottom trawling is currently banned.

Hipkins said conversations about bottom trawling are ongoing and future decisions around bottom trawling in all areas are still on the table.

“But we’ll deal with that [bottom trawling] everywhere rather than in isolation.”

LAWRENCE SMITH/STUFF

Prime Minister Chris Hipkins announces changes to marine protection within the Hauraki Gulf.

Hauraki Gulf Forum co-chair Nicola MacDonald said the new measures have been a decade in the making, but the package did not include everything the forum would like.

Threats like the invasive, [exotic seaweed caulerpa](#) need to be addressed, and new measures need to go hand-in-hand with efforts to stem the flow of tiko, sewage, mud, and plastics into the moana, MacDonald said.

Raewyn Peart, policy director at Environmental Defence Society, said the announcements are a positive start to restoring the gulf, but will not be enough on their own.

Gaps in the network of protected areas will need to be filled, particularly around Waiheke Island and Aotea/Great Barrier Island, Peart said.

environment

ABIGAIL DOUGHERTY/STUFF

Goat Island Marine reserve in Auckland has had issues with poachers fishing inside the marine reserve despite it being illegal and ruining the marine life in the Hauraki Gulf. (Video first published December 23, 2021)

Extending current marine reserves and adding new HPAs will increase the highly protected areas to around 6% of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park – and while that’s not enough, she said, it is a massive increase from the current 0.3% and should be applauded.

However, more tools and an adaptive management approach may be needed in the future.

“Ten years is far too long to achieve change,” she said.

“The biggest disappointment is that Government has not been prepared to bite the bullet on bottom trawling and dredging and remove these damaging practices from the Hauraki Gulf.”

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