

22 June 2021

Media statement

EDS delighted to finally see Government action on Sea Change

The Ministers of Fisheries and Conservation today jointly released the Government's Strategy in response to the Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan. The Strategy includes a range of measures including providing greater marine protection and improved fisheries management.

"We've waited a long time for government action on the Hauraki Gulf plan", said EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart, "so I am delighted to finally see a substantive response."

"The collaborative group established to develop the Sea Change Plan began its work in 2013, and the final plan was delivered in 2016, so it's now over 7 years since the project started. Sadly the state of the Hauraki Gulf is even worse than when we were working on the Plan, so action is now really urgent.

"It's great to see the Government's commitment to expanding the Leigh and Hahei marine reserves as well as establishing 11 new High Protection Areas and 5 new Seafloor Protection Areas. This will substantially increase the marine area protected within the Hauraki Gulf and help support a rebound in marine life.

"The Government's intention to create the new protected areas through special legislation, rather than using the antiquated procedures in the Marine Reserves Act, is also a positive move.

"However, it's important that the legislation is prioritised by Government, and introduced to Parliament without delay, to ensure the protected areas are put in place during this term of government and there are no further delays.

"The Government Strategy also has some positive improvements for fisheries management. These do not require new legislation and can be implemented immediately.

"Bottom damaging methods such as bottom trawling and Danish seining will be excluded from the Hauraki Gulf except within limited trawl corridors. Recreational scallop dredging will be banned and commercial scallop dredging limited to its current footprint.

"These measures have been long awaited. They will help avoid further damage to vitally important seabed habitats and enable the long process of healing past damage to commence.

"Localised fisheries management, focused on the Hauraki Gulf, will also be enabled by the development of an area-based fisheries plan and the establishment of a multi-stakeholder Hauraki Gulf Fisheries Plan Advisory Group.

“It will be important that strong iwi and community leaders are appointed to the Fisheries Advisory Group, including those representing environmental interests, and that the Group is given real influence over fisheries decision making for the Hauraki Gulf.

“It’s been a very long haul for many people to get this far and EDS would like to thank all those who have supported the Sea Change initiative over the past decade.

“Today’s announcements signal a significant turning point in how we manage the Hauraki Gulf. With ongoing Government, iwi and community support we can reverse the decades of degradation and start bringing the Gulf back to a flourishing productive marine system,” concluded Ms Peart.