

# Overview

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## *Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari: Creating a marine spatial plan for the Hauraki Gulf*

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karangarangatanga maha o te motu, tēnā koutou.

The Hauraki Gulf/Tīkapa Moana is a significant marine environment and one of the most highly used marine areas in the country. It is used for boating and recreational, commercial, and customary fishing. It is important to people living in the region, is of significance to mana whenua, and contributes to a large part of the region's tourism industry. Each year, the Hauraki Gulf/Tīkapa Moana generates more than \$2.7 billion in economic activity.

Protecting and conserving the marine ecosystems while balancing the competing interest groups in the region is challenging. Several councils and government departments are responsible for managing the various interest groups that use the Gulf, which includes the Crown's Treaty of Waitangi obligations. The Hauraki Gulf Forum has reported that, since 2011, there has been a decline in the state of the Gulf.

In 2013, the Hauraki Gulf Forum, Auckland Council, and Waikato Regional Council established the Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari project. They were joined by the Department of Conservation and the Ministry for Primary Industries. The objective of the project was to create New Zealand's first marine spatial plan, which would create a healthy, productive, and sustainable future for the Hauraki Gulf/Tīkapa Moana. The plan was developed by a stakeholder-led collaborative group rather than by the central and local government agencies. The plan, which is non-statutory and non-binding, was finalised in December 2016.

## **Main findings**

The Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari project was a large and ambitious undertaking aimed at addressing a complex problem that involved many overlapping interests. A collaborative approach can be useful for solving these kinds of problems. The project required significant commitment from local and central government agencies and representatives of the stakeholder-led collaborative group.

In many ways, the project was a successful example of a stakeholder-led collaborative approach. It resulted in a completed plan with general support from those who prepared it.

However, the plan is not easy for the central and local government agencies to implement, and those involved in the project are frustrated at the lack of progress in implementing the plan. We have identified aspects of the Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari project that, if done better, would have made implementing the plan easier:

- The agencies were not as involved in developing the marine spatial plan as they could have been. There needed to be a balance between giving the stakeholder-led collaborative group enough independence while still having the right amount of involvement from the agencies.
- There needed to be more communication and discussion of the plan with stakeholders as it neared completion. Because there was not as much engagement as there could have been, not all of the stakeholder groups agreed with the final plan.
- Towards the end of the project, and when the plan had been finished, there was little discussion with the community about it. The plan could have benefited from wider communication and, from that, gained wider support from the community.
- When the project was set up, certain matters, such as setting an appropriate scope, needed to be considered so the central and local government agencies could easily implement the plan.

- The agencies could also have prepared for how they would implement the plan, including how they would work together with other organisations and stakeholders, and what the role of mana whenua would be.

## Looking ahead

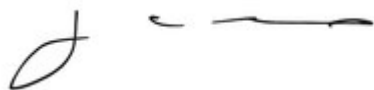
Collaborative approaches are increasingly used to prepare plans for protecting natural resources. We encourage all agencies that are setting up collaborative planning projects to consider the lessons in our report and the questions posed in the [Appendix](https://oag.parliament.nz/2018/hauraki/appendix) (<https://oag.parliament.nz/2018/hauraki/appendix>).

This project's success will ultimately depend on how the marine spatial plan is used and whether its recommendations are incorporated into local and central government's decision-making.

The Government has recently announced the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Committee to consider the implementation of the plan. It is important for the agencies to consider how they will work together to progress implementing the plan and get support from affected stakeholder groups, such as commercial and recreational fishing groups. There is a risk that if there is no further consideration of the recommendations in the marine spatial plan, the money and effort spent on the project will largely be wasted.

I thank all the stakeholders, staff from the agencies, and project representatives for their co-operation and openness as we carried out our audit of the project.

Nāku noa, nā,



Greg Schollum  
Deputy Controller and Auditor-General

5 December 2018

Office of the Auditor-General, 100 Molesworth Street, Thorndon, Wellington 6011 | + 64 4 917 1500 | [enquiry@oag.parliament.nz](mailto:enquiry@oag.parliament.nz) (<mailto:enquiry@oag.parliament.nz>)

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