

JANUARY 2020

Give your coast a helping hand

Me atawhai te takutai



Healthy Environments
He Taiao Mauriora

Waikato

REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Waikato



Getting it right for our coasts

Kia tika ai mō te takutai

If you live, work or play by the sea and at our beaches, you've probably noticed some things are not like they used to be.

You probably feel quite deeply about this, and have some thoughts about how we should be able to use and enjoy this natural environment forever.

That's where the *Waikato Regional Coastal Plan* comes in. It has the really important job of setting out how we sustainably manage our region's coastal environment.

The current coastal plan was first notified in 1995 and things are a lot different to how they were 24 years ago.

- National and regional rules and direction have changed which we now have to take into account.
- There are lots more people living, playing or working on Waikato's coasts.
- We're seeing environmental changes too.
- We have a much better understanding of how our climate is changing and the effects that this could have on our land and coasts.

We've also had feedback that the plan could be made easier to understand, and that we need to take a fresh look at whether we're subjecting activities to the right level of scrutiny.





Where are we talking about?

The regional coastal plan is the rulebook for activities in the coastal marine area – that’s the ‘wet’ part of the sea below the high tide mark and extending out to the 12 nautical mile limit (approximately 20km).

In this area the coastal plan can manage activities like the occupation of space, extraction of sand and other materials, and discharges of contaminants.

The big questions

To make it easier, we’ve divided our work into topics. In this document, we’ll briefly explain what each topic means and outline some of the issues we think need sorting out.

And this is where you come in. We’re keen to hear from you, what you think the issues are as well as some solutions. Now is your chance to come up with ideas that we may not have thought about on how to improve the way we manage the coasts of the Waikato region.

It comes down to two simple questions we’d like you to answer:

Are there any other issues that we haven’t identified that could be addressed in the review of the Waikato Regional Coastal Plan?

Do you have any suggestions on how Waikato Regional Council could address the issue?

Who knows, you may have a solution to a problem we have been struggling with for years.

How to have your say

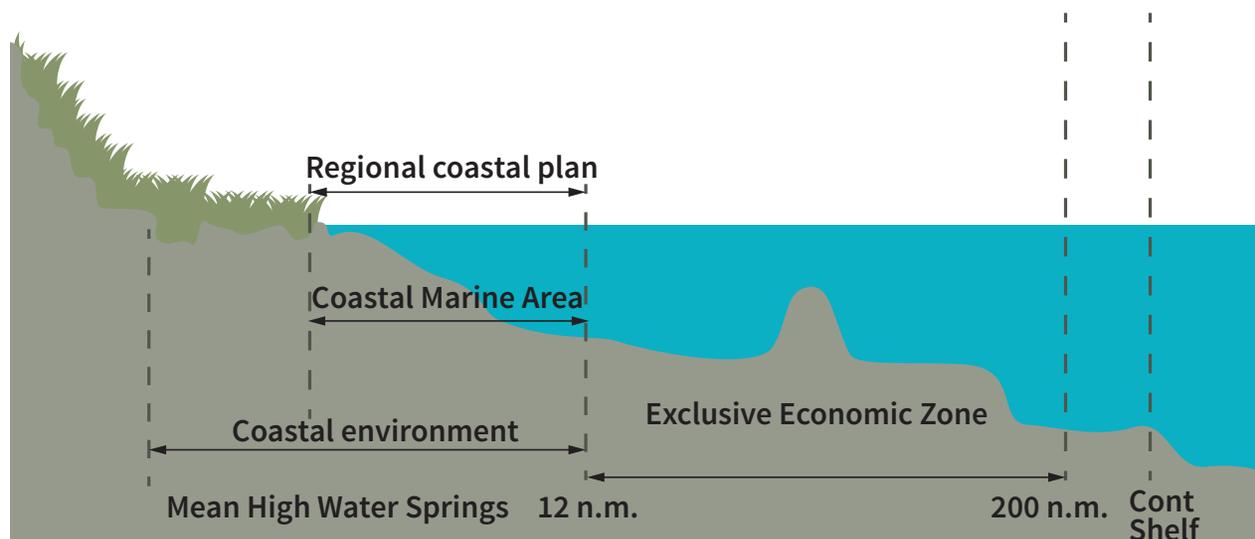
It’s our coast. It’s our collective responsibility to get this right.

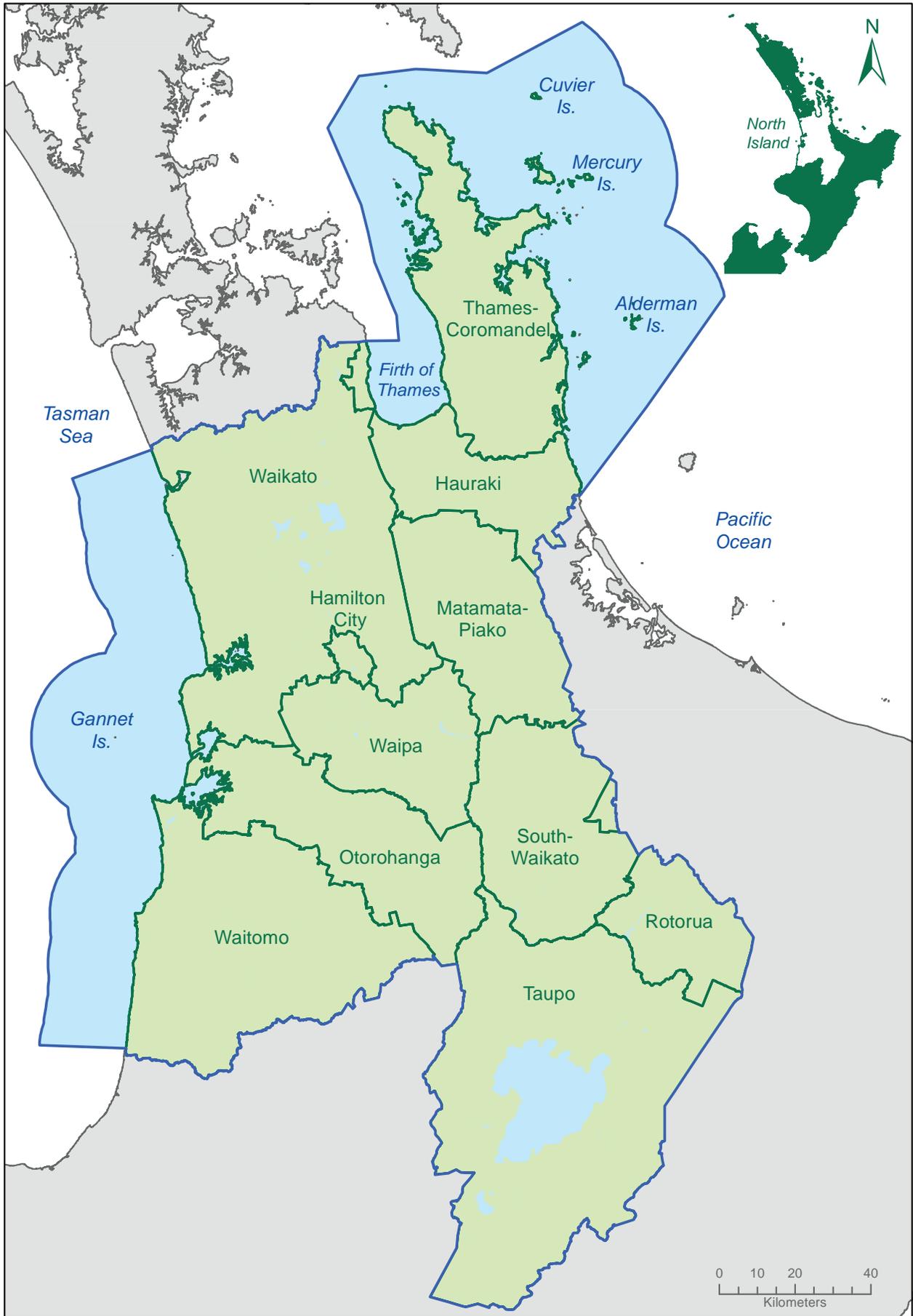
Make sure you have your say.

🌐 Complete the form online at [waikatoregion.govt.nz/rcp-review](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/rcp-review)

✉ Email us at HealthyEnvironments@waikatoregion.govt.nz stating the topic/s you’re commenting on and including your contact details

Please note that anonymous feedback will not be accepted and all feedback will form part of a public record.





About this document

Mō tēnei tuhinga

In some cases the issues are complex. That's why we've produced this document. It breaks down the information into plain English to enable everyone a better opportunity to get involved.

We know there are some people – like lawyers and planners – who like more detail about the issues we are considering. So there's a comprehensive coastal plan review discussion document available at www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/rcp-review.

Where to find additional information

Updated information on the review of the Waikato coastal plan can be found at www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/rcp-review. This webpage also includes major milestones, the engagement approach and timeline for the coastal plan review.





Social values of coastal and marine areas

Ngā uara hapori o te takutai moana

Why do we need to know about social values?

We need to know what the community values about the coast so we can reflect those values in how we manage our coasts. While these may change over time, integrating social and economic values with the requirements of the environment enhances our understanding of what's important to the community. In many cases, social values and environmental requirements are closely aligned.

As part of the review of the coastal plan, we'll need to consider social values in relation to all the coastal topics covered by the plan review process.

The social values of the region's coasts and marine areas are consistently highlighted in community plans as being an important issue to consider and these include outstanding natural landscapes and features and the special values of estuaries, bays, beaches, dunes and surf breaks.

What have you told us in the past?

Based on existing studies and community plans you have told us that these are the things you value about the coast.

Cultural identity

New Zealand is an island nation and New Zealanders are 'a coastal people' who live in and visit coastal areas regularly, often visiting the same beach annually as part of their holiday traditions.

Public access/valued public gathering space

Access to the coast is considered a right and a component of New Zealand's cultural identity. Public space for family and community gatherings and events plays a role in maintaining and enhancing social relationships.



Physical, mental and spiritual health

A place to exercise, relax, de-stress, reflect, be inspired and connect with nature.

Food gathering

Fishing and shellfish gathering are important sources of kaimoana (seafood) and recreation for communities.

Biodiversity

The coast is a habitat broadly accessible and rich in life, including many and diverse species. It is highly valued as an important interface between people and wildlife. Healthy marine habitats are also important for sustaining all of the social values identified.

Community education (formal and informal)

The shoreline is a site of rock pool ecosystems traditionally explored by New Zealand school children and as part of water safety education. These and other educational experiences establish connections with coastal areas and develop willingness to care for them.

Scenic beauty and natural character

The aesthetic and inspirational appeal of coastal ecosystems is highly valued and is reflected in cultural art and in widespread support for public access.

Recreation

Walking, dog walking, swimming, boogie boarding, sailing, paddle boarding, surfing etc. are highly valued recreational activities.

The quality of coastal waters have impacts on human health and wellbeing. Waikato's coastal marine areas are important spaces for recreation and food gathering. Social values tend to be diminished as water quality becomes degraded. Degraded water quality and the loss of the ability to swim and gather food that is safe to eat also undermines the meaning of an area to people and their memories of it.

The list above is not exhaustive but provides an initial step towards identifying the shared social values for the coastal marine area.



Have we missed anything?

What do you value about the coast?

This is your chance to tell us what you think we might have missed. Head to our website to provide your feedback: waikatoregion.govt.nz/rcp-review

Tangata whenua/ Mātauranga Māori

Tangata whenua have perspectives, obligations and values that approach environmental management in a different way and can also be specific to their particular tribal group. These perspectives need to be considered as part of resource management policy development and decision-making.

The Resource Management Act, New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act, and the Waikato Regional Policy Statement give special status to tangata whenua and set out principles and mechanisms through which their interests are provided for. These include, but are not limited to:

- the requirements to take account of iwi management plans when developing policy
- the requirements to consult with tangata whenua when developing policy
- the requirement for consent applications to identify and document, within an assessment of environmental effects, tangata whenua interested in or affected by consent proposals, the consultation undertaken, and any response to the views of those consulted
- the requirement to take into account the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi
- recognition of customary interests in the common marine and coastal area.

Joint management agreements

Waikato Regional Council has joint management agreements – known as JMAs – with five iwi entities across the region. Each agreement outlines a process for parties to follow when developing policies and plans.

For this review, all parties have agreed that the council together with JMA partners and Pare Hauraki will establish a Regional Partnerships Committee to consider plan content before recommending their position to the full council for approval.

The review committee first met in May 2019. It will also provide tangata whenua perspectives and assist with the inclusion of mātauranga Māori into the planning process.

National Planning Standards requirements

The new national planning standards require councils to include a chapter in their plans for tangata whenua related content. The chapter will provide a location for provisions that detail processes and context relating to tangata whenua.

The national planning standards recommend the following headings:

- recognition of hapū and iwi
- tangata whenua – local authority relationships
- hapū and iwi planning documents
- involvement and participation with tangata whenua.

As part of the review of the coastal plan, this information will be prepared in collaboration with tangata whenua. It is intended that more specific tangata whenua provisions will be integrated throughout the plan as each topic is developed.

Inclusion of tangata whenua values

There was limited involvement of tangata whenua in decision-making and in the practical expression of kaitiakitanga in the coastal plan notified in 1995. A constructive partnership is being formed with tangata whenua with respect to the management of the region's resources. The current policy regarding tangata whenua values states that the council will recognise and take into account historical, spiritual, cultural and traditional values of tangata whenua in relation to activities.

Numerous values have been defined by tangata whenua and the council, such as mauri; access, use and enjoyment of resources and places; involvement in decision-making; and the ability to exercise and provide for kaitiakitanga. Regional plans are required to recognise identified values and take into account any relevant iwi management plans or documents. An ever increasing number of tangata whenua values are being identified which may not be appropriately taken into account by the current plans, so the council will need to work with tangata whenua to address these.

Mātauranga Māori

An objective of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement that is to incorporate mātauranga Māori provisions into plans and the consideration of resource consent applications.

The council has initiated several projects which seek to better understand mātauranga Māori as well as incorporate it into council work programmes. There will be ongoing responsibilities to incorporate mātauranga Māori into council work and this will need to be appropriately reflected within the new plan.



The natural character and landscape values of the coast

Te āhua tūturu me ngā uara tirohanga whenua o te takutai



Have we missed anything?

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Why is it important?

Natural character is a general term used to describe the natural elements of the coastal environment – that is, it's 'naturalness'. Areas that are less developed tend to have higher 'natural character' than those that are developed or modified, but all areas have some natural character. The effect of different types of modification varies with context and may be perceived differently by different parts of the community.

Basically it's a feeling or 'vibe' about the coastal area.

When we refer to the 'landscape' it includes a range of values that, combined together, make a geographic area what it is. While natural processes established the land, human processes have modified it through various land use practices and, in some instances, landscape has changed dramatically. All of this combined is what we mean by 'landscape'.

While landscapes are larger areas that are perceived as a whole, these can include a number of features within them. Landscape features are discrete components which are clearly distinguished from the surrounding landscape. This includes things like mountains, estuaries and other distinct, usually named, features.

Both coasts of the Waikato have areas of water with wild, natural and scenic qualities that provide an important sense of place and identity to both locals and visitors. But development in the coastal marine area can detract from these values. The coastal plan directs where activities should be avoided and where they may be appropriate to protect these values.

The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement requires us to identify areas where the natural character or landscape values are outstanding, and include provisions in the plan to preserve and protect these values.

Please note that this plan only addresses natural character and landscape values below the high tide mark, i.e. seascapes. While development on land is largely managed by District Councils under their District Plans.

How is it currently being managed?

Natural character and natural features in the coastal marine area are addressed in Chapter 3.1 (Preservation of natural character) of the *Waikato Regional Coastal Plan*.

The coastal plan does not contain any direct policy references to the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes. Natural character is not mapped, although 'General Map 3: Coastal Landscape Assessment' contains a coastal landscape assessment at a national, regional and local level without giving detail on individual sites and characteristics.

Appendix IV 'Areas of significant conservation value' includes a number of nationally significant or outstanding coastal landforms and associated processes, although this list is not comprehensive.

What are the issues?

The plan does not adequately identify natural character, natural feature and landscape values

The outstanding values and characteristics of areas of natural character, natural features or landscapes need to be assessed to ensure they are mapped or identified in the coastal marine area.

The plan will need to include provisions which decide which activities can take place while preserving and protecting natural character, natural feature and landscape values

The coastal plan will contain a framework to determine which activities may be appropriate in or adjoining these areas of outstanding natural character, natural features or landscapes, and to avoid significant adverse effects on natural character, natural landscapes and natural features in all other areas of the coastal marine area.

Water quality in the coastal marine area

Te kounga wai i te takutai moana

Why is it important?

Water quality in the coastal marine area can be affected by direct discharges like stormwater, waste water, sewage, sediment and hazardous substances.

The coastal plan does not deal with the discharge of pollutants (direct or diffuse) into the river systems before they flow into the coastal marine area. Those are important issues which will be addressed as the Waikato Regional Plan is reviewed.

Issues associated with discharges from aquaculture activities are dealt with under the aquaculture section.

How is it currently being managed?

Management of water quality in the coastal marine area is addressed in Chapter 4 (Water quality) of the *Waikato Regional Coastal Plan*. This chapter contains objectives and policies which recognise the adverse effects of a reduction in water quality and guide management of activities to maintain or enhance water quality.

What are the issues?

There is a need to identify water quality standards and types of coastal waters

The coastal plan is required to establish water quality standards for each type of coastal water. This has not been done in the current plan. As part of this review, areas of degraded water quality will be identified and priority will be given to improving water quality in any such areas.

Management of discharges to the coastal marine area

Discharges to the coastal marine area can reduce water quality, impact on marine ecology and have social, cultural and economic impacts. The rules in the coastal plan need to be revised to address the impacts of discharges to the coastal marine area and ensure water quality is maintained or, where degraded, improved.

When the regional plan is reviewed, the impact of land based discharges on the coastal marine area will also need to be managed based on the water quality standards identified in the coastal plan.

Have we missed anything?

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Structures in the coastal marine area

Ngā hanganga i te takutai moana

Why is it important?

Structures include those human made constructions that occupy space in, on or over the foreshore and seabed. This includes, for example, jetties and mooring structures. Sea walls are covered in the 'Hazards in the coastal marine area' section.

How is it currently being managed?

Management of structures in the coastal marine area is dealt with under Chapter 5 (Structures), Chapter 6 (Marine Farming) and Chapter 6A (Marinas) of the *Waikato Regional Coastal Plan*.

What are the issues?

Integration of coastal structures with land uses

The coastal plan does not address the integration of coastal structures with land uses, especially structures that cross the boundary between the land and the marine area. As the regional council is responsible for management of the coastal marine area and district councils are responsible for management of adjacent dry land, there is potential for inconsistency between planning provisions and land management rules across the high tide mark.

Recognition of electricity generation activities

The National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation requires recognition of the national significance of renewable electricity generation activities (such as wind and wave power and transmission infrastructure) by providing for the development, operation, maintenance and upgrading of new and existing renewable electricity generation activities, including in the coastal marine area. The coastal plan does not give effect to this national policy statement.

Ensuring structures make the best use of space

The coastal plan does not include provisions that require structures to be managed in such a way that makes the most efficient use of occupied space, which is a requirement of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement. This includes requiring structures to be made available for public or multiple uses where reasonable and appropriate; requiring the removal of abandoned or redundant structures that have no public value; and ensuring that space consented to be used for a specific activity is used effectively and without unreasonable delay.

Including a framework to assess applications for marinas

The current plan provisions about marinas are limited to the establishment and use of the Tairua Marina, as they were inserted as the result of an Environment Court decision specific to Tairua. The coastal plan does not currently include an appropriate planning framework for authorising marinas, including the expansion of existing marinas or future marina development.

Managing the effects of maimai and whitebait stands

The current coastal plan is more permissive than the regional plan and this has resulted in an inconsistent management framework. There is also no specific provisions requiring maintenance, and the removal of abandoned structures.

The cumulative impacts or appropriateness of structures

A use of the coast has intensified it has been difficult to manage the spread or location of structures under the current coastal plan. The identification of significant coastal values will provide clearer guidance on the appropriateness of structures in different locations.

Management of moorings provisions

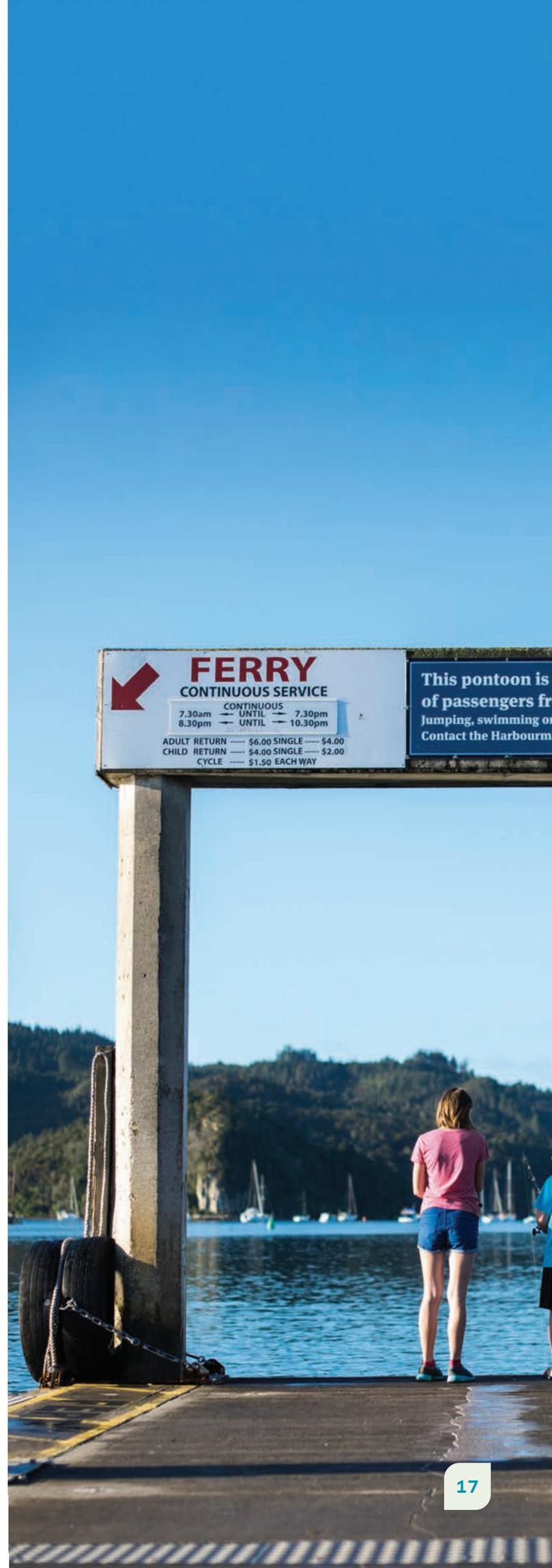
Some of the current zoned mooring areas are over capacity, undersized or in an inappropriate location, or require realignment of moorings for efficiency. The current plan provisions can be inflexible, making it difficult to deal with these issues. There are also issues with the increase of moorings outside of zoned mooring areas, causing cumulative effects on the coastal marine area and other users. Anchoring and occupation are not addressed by the coastal plan.

Effect of abandoned structures

Abandoned or derelict structures can have adverse effects on cultural or natural heritage values and navigation safety, be a danger to public health and safety or restrict public access to and along the coastal marine area. The Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act sets out regional council responsibilities for the identification and management of abandoned structures. The coastal plan does not include provisions for the management of abandoned or derelict structures.

Have we missed anything?

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The disturbance of the foreshore and seabed

Te whakararutanga o te takutai moana

Why is it important?

The disturbance of the foreshore and seabed includes activities such as dredging, the extraction of materials, the use of vehicles on the foreshore or stock access, reclamation of the foreshore, the dumping of materials, and seabed drilling.

It also includes provision for dredging of channels to maintain boat access in harbours, and constructing and maintaining marina access.

These activities can provide for public access or economic growth, but can also impact on the environment. For example, coastal vegetation and habitats and landscape qualities may be damaged or destroyed, natural coastal processes such as surf breaks could be interrupted and water quality might be temporarily reduced.

How is it currently being managed?

The coastal plan addresses these activities in Chapter 7 (Foreshore and/or seabed disturbances) and in Chapter 3.4 (Protection of coastal processes).

The general direction provided is to avoid adverse effects, as far as practicable, on coastal resources.

Maintenance dredging for specified purposes is recognised as an appropriate activity. Dredging is required to avoid the loss of sediment, other than muddy or contaminated material, from coastal systems, and dumping of spoil should avoid adverse effects from the disposal of material in the marine environment. Inappropriate reclamation, declamation and drainage in the coastal marine area is to be avoided, with criteria provided to assess if it is appropriate.

What are the issues?

Ensuring the protection of natural coastal processes

Dredging and disturbance can impact on natural coastal processes such as surf breaks and natural sediment movement, and may cause erosion of beaches etc. The coastal plan needs better direction and integration to protect natural coastal processes.

Reclamation of the foreshore or seabed

Although there have been few applications for coastal reclamations under the coastal plan, they can have significant adverse effects on coastal systems. The plan could provide better guidance on the circumstances where reclamations may be appropriate.

Disturbance, dredging and deposition rules

The disturbance, dredging and deposition provisions are based around outdated requirements and in some situations are difficult to implement and interpret. For example, permitted rules require that “there shall be no more than minor adverse effects”, which is subjective.

Some aspects, such as the current approach of retaining sand and natural materials in coastal systems (but not mud or contaminated materials), appear to be achieving positive environmental outcomes. These provisions can be retained in the plan, but will require updating to provide a more comprehensive framework for the consideration of these activities.

Protecting significant surf breaks

The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement requires that surf breaks of national significance are protected. We have four in the Waikato region – Manu Bay, Whale Bay and Indicators from Raglan, and Whangamatā Bar in the Coromandel. The coastal plan might not provide adequate protection of these surf breaks. As part of the plan review the protection of additional surf breaks may be considered.

Managing vehicle access to and along the coastal marine area

Vehicle access to and on the foreshore and seabed below the high tide mark is not clearly addressed by the plan. These provisions must be amended to be consistent with New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement direction by identifying situations and areas where vehicle use is appropriate and in what circumstances it should be restricted.



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Open space and public access

Te koraha me ngā ara tūmatanui



Why is it important?

As Kiwis we love open spaces and to be able to access our coasts to do things like boating, walking, fishing and gathering kaimoana.

This topic is closely related to other topics that involve occupation of coastal space, including:

- Structures
- The disturbance of the foreshore and seabed
- Aquaculture
- Biosecurity
- Hazards in the coastal marine area.

Coastal structures and disturbance can result in the loss of public access through the coastal marine area. For example, canal developments and seawalls causing loss of high tide beaches.

There are some limits to what the coastal plan can do. It can only control activities within the coastal marine area, so close integration with land based access and public access infrastructure is required for integrated management.

The coastal plan can control activities and uses that can both promote or degrade public access, recreational use of the coastal marine area and open space. It is important that these uses and opportunities are identified so they can be acknowledged and protected from inappropriate developments.

How is it currently being managed?

Management of the open space and public access in the coastal marine area is dealt with under Chapter 9 (Public access) of the *Waikato Regional Coastal Plan*. The provisions in the coastal plan are not inconsistent with the direction in the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, but do not fully give effect to it. Further policy direction on the provision of public access is given within marina policies; esplanade reserves are required on new reclamations, where practicable; and policy guidance on how a financial contribution is to be used includes public access, amenity values and recreational values where valued by the community.

Surface water activities are addressed in Chapter 9 (Surface water activities). The objectives seek to manage potential conflicts between different surface water activities and avoid adverse environmental effects. Policies address conflicting surface water activities and protecting shorelines, habitat and wildlife values, but these are implemented through non-statutory methods.

What are the issues?

Public walking access within the CMA

The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement requires the maintenance and enhancement of public access to, along and adjacent to the coastal marine area, and only allows a restriction where it is necessary for certain purposes. While the coastal plan is consistent with this direction, redrafting will better give effect to those requirements.

Public open space and recreation

The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement directs that the need for public open space for both passive and active recreation, within and adjacent to the coastal marine area, be recognised and provided for. The current coastal plan does not address this, so provisions will probably be needed to recognise the need for coastal recreational activities and guard against the loss of public space in the coastal marine area.

Have we missed anything?

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Hazards in the coastal marine area

Ngā mōreareatanga i te takutai moana

Why is it important?

Activities and structures in the coastal marine area can be adversely affected by coastal hazards, such as erosion and flooding. This can then also create or worsen coastal erosion of adjoining land, property or infrastructure, either directly or by altering natural coastal processes. Should sea levels continue to rise and weather patterns change, our choice of response is a key part of community adaptive management planning/community strategies.

How is it currently being managed?

Management of coastal hazards in the coastal marine area is addressed in Chapter 8 (Natural hazards) of the *Waikato Regional Coastal Plan*. The policies seek to identify hazard areas, use a precautionary approach, protect natural features and manage erosion structures.

What are the issues?

Climate change and rising sea levels subject coastal structures to increased risk of damage

Sea level rise and increasing storms may place structures and activities in the coastal marine area at increased risk of damage. The coastal plan needs to allow existing structures to adapt over time while new structures must be designed to avoid increasing the risk of adverse effects from coastal hazards.

Existing infrastructure

Existing infrastructure is located in areas that will be subject to increasing risks of natural hazard events over time. This infrastructure includes flood protection assets, as well as regionally significant infrastructure in the coastal marine area such as roads and electricity. The coastal plan needs to provide for infrastructure to retain the ability to function, but must also encourage options to adapt to reduce risk.

Hard protection structures to protect existing land use

Hard protection structures – such as seawalls – put in place to protect property from the hazard of coastal erosion can cause a range of issues. These can include erosion of the adjacent shoreline, adversely affecting public access and local coastal processes and ecosystems.

Seawalls can create a sense of security and encourage further development, increasing the potential risk should sea levels continue to rise. Hard protection structures may be part of long term adaption planning and reducing long term risk, so this needs to be reflected in the coastal plan.

Existing development in areas at high risk of being affected by coastal erosion or coastal inundation requires adaption planning to promote long term sustainable risk reduction. Hard protection structures can be part of adaption planning, but need to be done with great care. The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement and the Regional Policy Statement promote reducing coastal hazard risks and restoring natural protection while discouraging hard protection structures, except for the protection of significant infrastructure.

Have we missed anything?

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Indigenous biodiversity in the coastal marine area

Te rerenga rauropi māori i te takutai moana

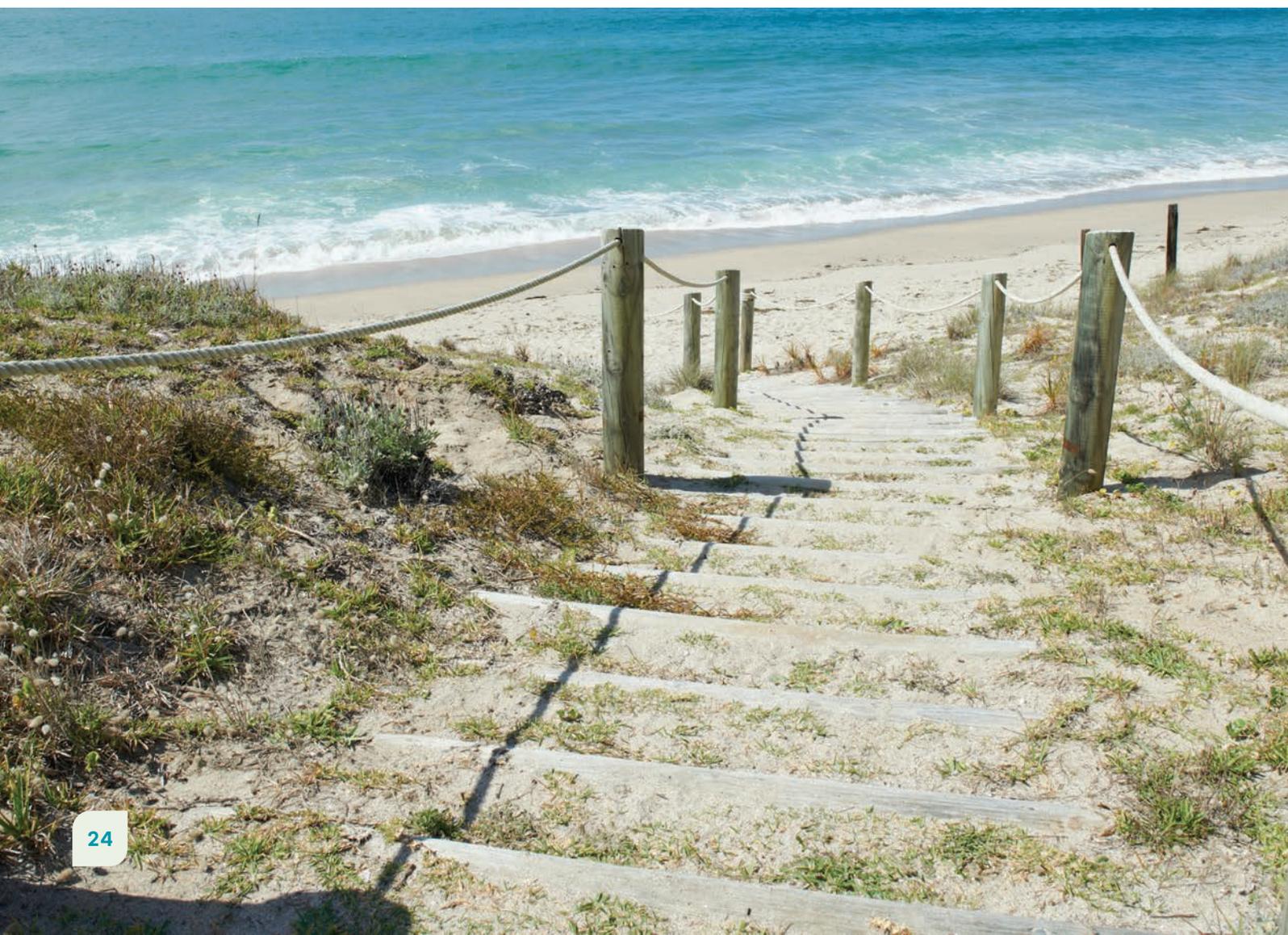
Why is it important?

Our coastal marine area is highly valued for its ecosystems and indigenous biodiversity. In fact, there are some ecosystems and habitats that can only be found in the coastal environment. These include estuaries, lagoons, coastal wetlands, intertidal zones, rocky reef systems, eelgrass and saltmarshes, and many threatened or at risk indigenous plants and animals, as well as species that are important for recreational, commercial, traditional or cultural purposes.

In this review, we're not looking at terrestrial biodiversity (the land above the mean high tide). This is the responsibility of district councils.

How is it currently being managed?

While there are no rules in the *Waikato Regional Coastal Plan* directly relating to biodiversity, Section 3.2 (Significant Vegetation and Habitat) contains a number of policies which seek to protect areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitat of indigenous fauna. These are implemented through the maps of areas of significant conservation value (ASCV), and through information required from consent applicants. A brief description of the values in each ASCV is given in the schedule. The locations and values are based on the best species and habitat information that we had at the time and now we have an opportunity to reflect the latest information.



What are the issues?

The need to identify and protect significant indigenous biodiversity

The *Waikato Regional Policy Statement* directs plans to identify and protect significant natural areas. The ASCV maps in the coastal plan don't achieve this. Identification of significant natural areas in the coastal marine area is hindered by a lack of comprehensive data, particularly for seafloor habitats in open coastal waters. The cost of surveying the entire region's coastal waters would be prohibitive, but some additional work on habitats and species and identification of significant natural areas using the regional policy statement significance criteria is being carried out by NIWA.

Maintenance of biodiversity

As well as protecting ASCV, the council also has responsibility for sustaining the ecosystems of the coastal environment by maintaining the diversity of indigenous biodiversity in general. It also gives effect to the regional policy statement's regional no-net loss approach, and recognises connectivity between significant natural areas and other habitats is important for non-significant biodiversity.

The difficulty in ensuring protection for particular species or locations

Certain threatened species may warrant particular consideration. For example, the threat to Bryde's whales is ship strike – an example of where the threat to a threatened species is not something that the plan can directly control but there is a need to assess what could be considered over and above any voluntary actions. Threats to Māui dolphins and effects of fishing methods on ecologically significant seafloor ecologies and benthic habitats also need to be considered.

A need to promote and enable the restoration and enhancement of indigenous habitats and ecosystems

The restoration and enhancement of the habitats of indigenous fauna and threatened ecosystem and habitat types is a key component of biodiversity management and can support no net loss. The plan review needs to recognise and provide a framework for restoration activities, including the consideration of biodiversity offsetting and environmental compensation.

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Biosecurity in the coastal marine area

Te tiakitanga taiao i te takutai moana

Why is it important?

Marine biosecurity is all about reducing the risk of introducing and spreading weeds, pests and harmful marine organisms in the coastal marine area.

Marine pests can be managed under the Resource Management Act through regional coastal plans and under the Biosecurity Act 1993 through regional 'pest' and 'pathway' management plans. The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement requires the control of activities in the coastal marine area that could cause the spread of marine pests that could have adverse effects on the coastal environment.

While there is some overlap between the two Acts, they manage different aspects of marine pest control, and there is a need for consistency between these regulatory approaches.

The introduction of harmful marine organisms may have significant adverse effects, including loss of biodiversity and natural ecosystem functioning. It may also result in direct impacts on industries such as aquaculture and fisheries, and negatively affect important cultural, amenity and human health values such as marine food gathering.

While most invasive organisms can naturally spread and disperse, human activities in the marine environment can increase invasive species' ranges. Moving boats, construction equipment, and marine farm stock can transport invasive species across barriers and may speed up the spread of marine pests.

How is it currently being managed?

The *Waikato Regional Coastal Plan* does not contain any objectives or policies seeking specific outcomes relating to biosecurity or harmful organisms, and no rules directly relating to the introduction or spread of harmful organisms except for those relating to the introduction of exotic plant species.

However, Chapter 6 (Marine Farming) notes the potential adverse effect of introducing organisms, and non-statutory methods require the council to coordinate its response to pest management and otherwise ensure that the requirements of the Biosecurity Act 1993 are met.

The plan controls the introduction of exotic plant species through rules. Introducing any exotic plant species to the coastal marine area is discretionary except in the Firth of Thames ASCV where it is prohibited; the introduction of alligator weed and spartina into the CMA is prohibited (Rule 16.2.8). The discharge of chemicals to control exotic pest plant species (Rule 16.3.12) requires consent but the purpose of the rule is to manage the discharge of hazardous substances rather than address the control of pest plants for biosecurity reasons.

The Waikato Regional Council together with Auckland, Northland and the Bay of Plenty are part of the 'Top of the North' partnership and have recently consulted on managing marine biosecurity across our four regions with a focus on boat hulls.

What are the issues?

Harmful marine organisms can be introduced and spread into the Waikato region as a result of activities in the coastal environment.

These activities can include structures, discharges, moorings, marinas, jetties and wharves, and aquaculture. These can facilitate active or passive spread of these organisms. The plan needs clear policy direction and rules to address biosecurity issues in the coastal marine area.

Discharges to land that result in harmful organisms entering marine water from boat cleaning or other activities may also require control.

Harmful marine organisms can be introduced and spread into the Waikato region from vessel movements

There is potential for the introduction and spread of harmful organisms through recreational and commercial boat movements, which is not an activity the plan can control. The plan could state clean vessel standards for entering harbours, but there are feasibility and enforcement issues, including time and costs for boat owners, and a lack of council resources and facilities to monitor or enforce.

In May 2018 the Ministry for Primary Industries introduced biofouling requirements for all commercial and recreational vessels arriving in New Zealand, and vessels must arrive with a clean hull. The Ministry does not apply these standards for movements within New Zealand.

Any proposed plan provisions relating to clean vessels will need to be aligned with Waikato Regional Council's pest management plans under the Biosecurity Act.

The plan doesn't enable appropriate control of pest plants

The control of coastal pest plants in the Waikato, such as spartina and saltwater paspalum, by herbicide application cannot be carried out without resource consents in all circumstances. This can add costs and delays to appropriate restoration activities.

Have we missed anything?

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Historic heritage

Taonga tuku iho

Why is it important?

The coastal environment of the Waikato contains a number of recorded archaeological sites, many of which are significant to Māori. However, much historic heritage in the coastal marine area is unrecorded or unidentified. Historic heritage includes places, structures and sites, as well as areas and surroundings, that provide the historic context or landscape.

Activities in the CMA can result in damage to or loss of historic heritage and the plan may contain provisions to manage those activities to protect or manage historic heritage.

How is it currently being managed?

Management of historic heritage in the coastal marine area is dealt with under Chapter 3.3 (Amenity and heritage values). This includes a policy which seeks to ensure the protection of the region's historic heritage from any adverse effects of use and development. The rules implementing this policy are restricted to structures and military training. Historic heritage is not explicitly mentioned in these rules.

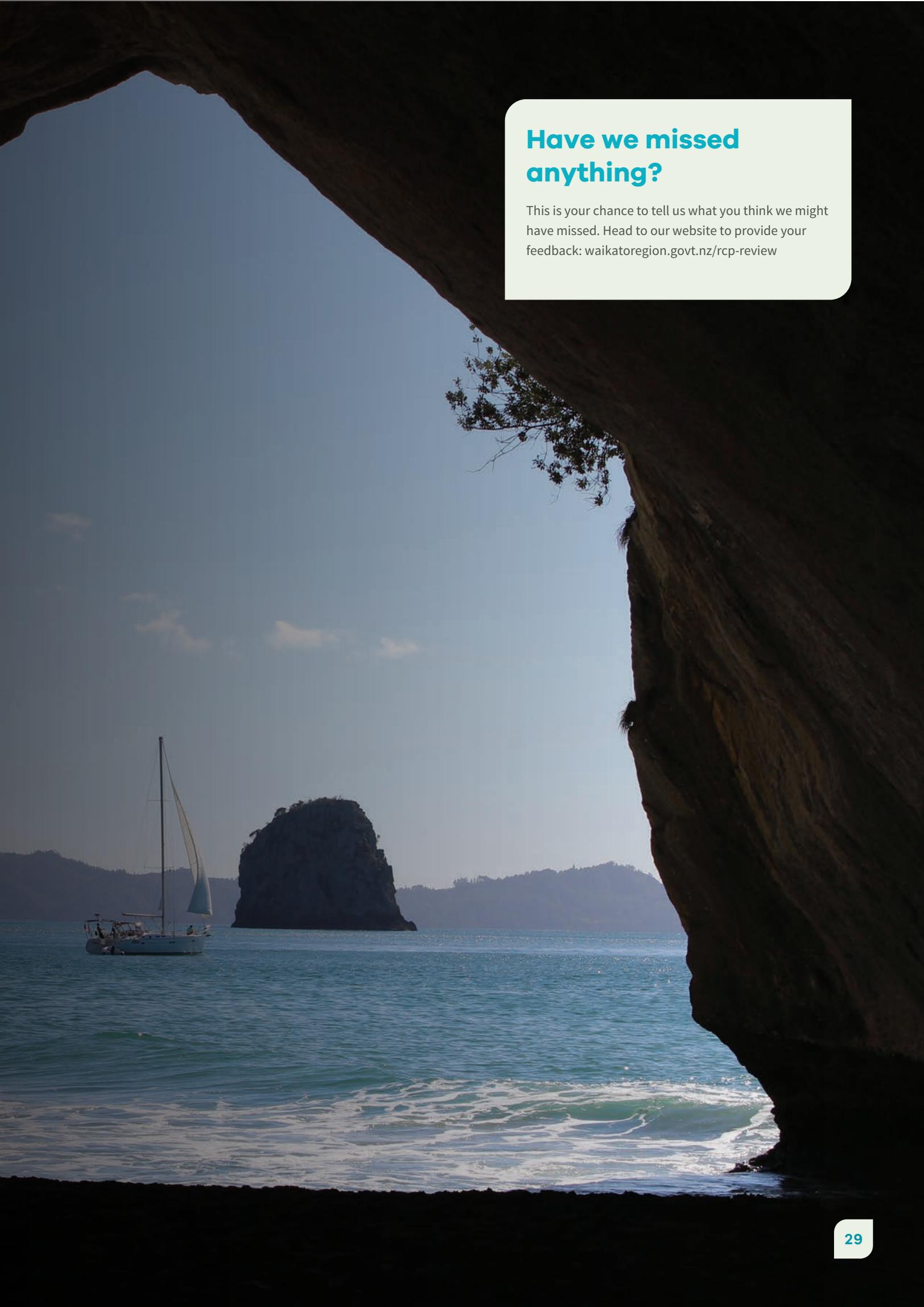
What are the issues?

Lack of identification of historic heritage in the coastal marine area

Although an assessment of known archaeological and historic sites in or adjacent to the coastal marine area has been undertaken, there are likely to be many more unknown sites, especially in undeveloped coastal areas. As sites or areas containing historic heritage in the coastal marine area cannot be easily identified, the coastal plan must take a precautionary approach to their protection, such as controlling activities that could have an impact on these values.

Need for integrated management and protection of historic heritage

The plan does not include provisions to protect historic heritage from inappropriate use and development and these will need to be developed. There is also the need for better integration between regulatory agencies such as central government, and regional and district councils to ensure consistent management of historic heritage.



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Aquaculture

Ahumoana

Why is it important?

Aquaculture generally involves occupation of public water space, structures, discharges and deposition on and disturbance to the seabed, and requires high water quality. Mussels and oysters are currently the primary products, with opportunities for fed fish and other aquaculture.

There are approximately 1420ha of consented aquaculture space in the Waikato and a 2007 report estimate the economic impact of aquaculture in the region at \$27 million per year. While it has economic benefits, it may also impact upon public access, amenity values and recreational values valued by the community. As an industry, aquaculture is developing in New Zealand and the rules are seen by industry as being restrictive to future development and opportunities.

How is it currently being managed?

The coastal plan provides for longline mussels, intertidal oysters and other structures through a mixture of zone-specific and region-wide rules. Different types of activity are provided for in different locations. In parts of Wilson Bay longline mussels and other structures are enabled, in others fed aquaculture can take place – in the Coromandel Marine Farming Zone structures including for fed aquaculture can be installed. Intertidal oyster farming is provided for outside of the two zones, and oyster depuration may occur within the Wilson Bay Zone. New marine farming structures (aside from spat catching, oyster farms and structures for research purposes) are prohibited outside of current marine farming zones.

Chapter 6 of the coastal plan contains one objective and eight policies relating to marine farm structures, diversification, fed aquaculture, the Coromandel Marine Farming Zone, recreation and navigation, integrated management and use of coastal space. A suite of rules address activities both in and outside of the zones, including structures, spat catching, discharges of feed and therapeutic compounds, and farm extensions.

What are the issues?

Adverse environmental effects of aquaculture

If inappropriately sited or managed, aquaculture can have direct impacts on the ecology of the sea floor and the water column. Aquaculture can have other effects, such as depleting of nutrients or, in the case of fed fish, increasing nutrients in the water. Other adverse effects include lighting, litter and conflict with recreational uses through the occupation of public water space. These must be considered in how marine farming is managed by the coastal plan.

The rules lack clarity and some aquaculture activities are not well addressed

Although some generally robust aquaculture policies and rules were added to the coastal plan in 2011, some parts are still outdated or not worded as well as they could be, including some rules. Spat catching and subsequent spat on-growing are not well addressed. A review of these provisions, including terminology, is needed for consistency.

Spatial guidance for new aquaculture

Outside of zoned areas, the Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan ('Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari') has identified indicative preferred areas for new aquaculture space. The coastal plan review will consider a range of areas, including those identified in Sea Change, to see if they are suitable for marine farming, considering their biodiversity, natural character values, and water quality. There is currently no guidance on which values might be more important than others when deciding where aquaculture should be located, however mapping of significant and outstanding characteristics and values will provide some guidance. We will also need to recognise the different requirements of different farmed species, and may be needed for future Treaty settlements, if that information is available at the time of drafting.

Cumulative costs and charges incurred by aquaculture operators

A range of costs levied under the Resource Management Act are incurred by aquaculture operators, including monitoring charges and bonds. Uncertainty around these costs and how they could change over time may impact economic viability. A review of monitoring requirements may improve consistency across farms, as appropriate, and ensure they remain robust over time.

Flexibility in plan provisions in order to cope with a changing natural environment

The aquaculture industry is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including warmer and more acidic seas and possibly even anoxic seas at times, as well as increased sedimentation from coastal erosion and changing economic conditions. Flexibility to enable aquaculture to adapt to changes may need to be balanced with the need to manage the impacts of the industry on the marine environment and other users.

Provisions for experimental aquaculture

The ability to innovate is important for the future of the industry, particularly to add value and adapt to climate change. Industry is interested in the plan providing for a range of different types of experimental aquaculture, for example, the advances made in fin fish farming in a laboratory as opposed to testing feasibility in marine areas.

Lack of integration managing cross-boundary issues

There may be issues in managing and providing roading, parking and wharves where land-based facilities are required for aquaculture. Managing activities on land cannot always be tied to coastal marine area consents. The coastal plan cannot guide or control land use activities which are a district council function, but recognition of this issue is required when developing criteria guiding the location of activities. The review will need to take into account allocation of space in the coastal marine area. Land use decisions may also affect aquaculture through adverse effects on water quality.

Lack of integration with neighbouring regional councils

There could be benefits of aligning some of our plan provisions with neighbouring regions, such as for biosecurity.

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Management of mangroves

Te whakahaere repo waikure

Why is it important?

The mangrove species *Avicennia marina* subsp. *Australasica* is a native species to New Zealand. Mangroves have expanded in extent in sheltered harbours and estuaries over the past 50 or so years where sediment deposition has created suitable habitat. While mangroves can provide a variety of physical and ecological functions like reducing coastal erosion and providing habitat for native species, it can also have adverse effects on social and recreational uses, including reducing open water space, amenity and coastal views, and boating/walking access.

Mangrove management has been controversial in the past, both in the Waikato and in other regions of the North Island, where they naturally occur. There is a tension between their environmental benefits for ecosystems and shoreline protection and their effects on access, views and retention of sediment.

How is it currently being managed?

Mangrove management is not addressed specifically in the coastal plan. Any removal activities are managed under the rules for the removal or eradication of indigenous plant species (Rules 16.2.1 and 16.2.3). Removal is allowed in limited situations as a permitted activity, with any other removal a discretionary activity. Objectives and policies provide little direction on the appropriateness of any management.

What are the issues?

Lack of identification of outstanding and ecologically significant coastal values

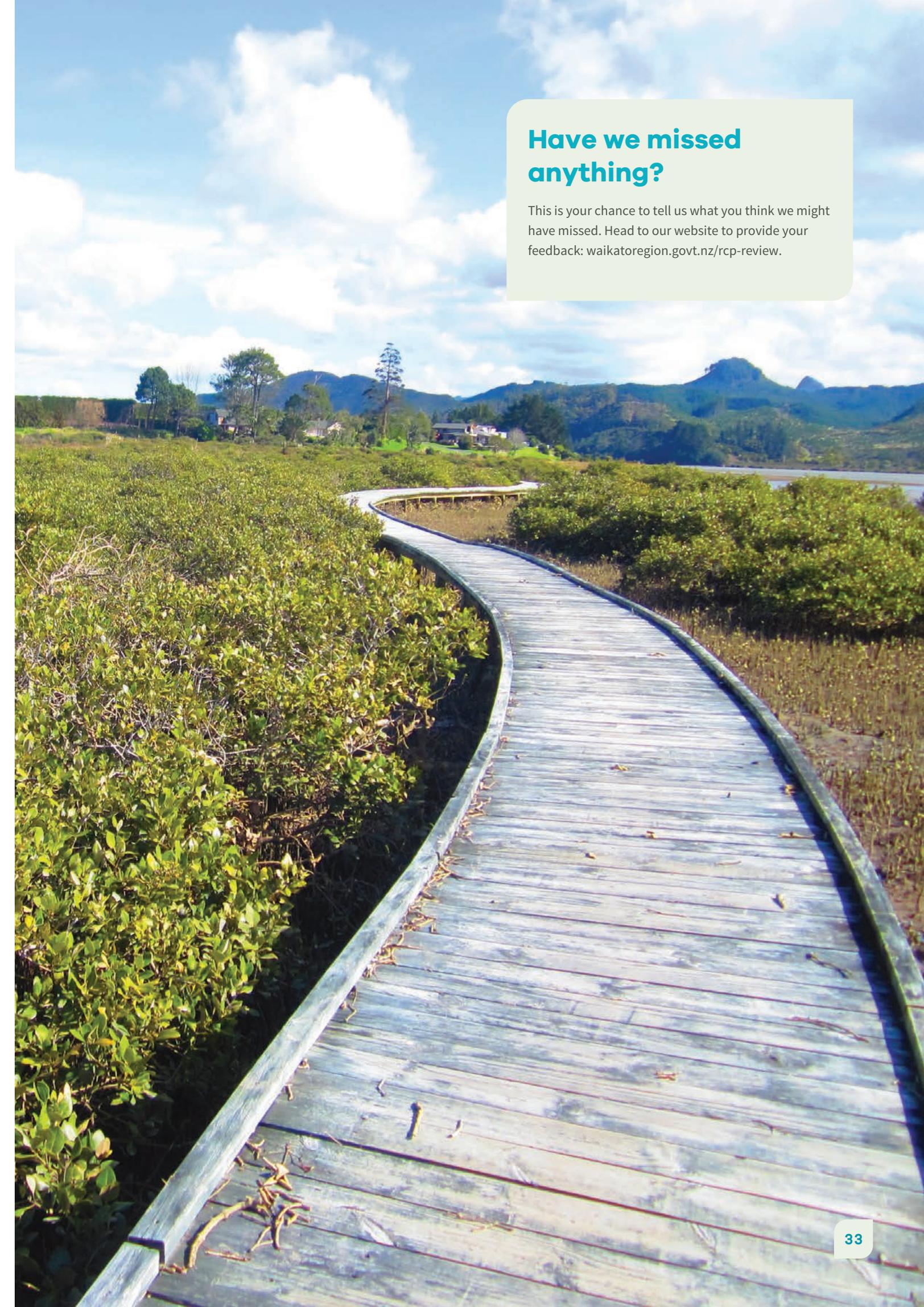
Areas of ecological significance, outstanding natural character and outstanding natural landscapes and natural features are required to be identified. Certain areas of mangroves have significant values and will need to be clearly identified and protected.

The plan does not provide a comprehensive framework for mangrove management

Mangrove management is controlled under dated and very general provisions that do not provide much direction on when mangrove removal may be more or less appropriate and what things should be considered when making these decisions. One option that could significantly improve the way mangroves are managed would be to include maps and criteria that give clear direction on mangrove management.

Lack of clarity about who pays and who benefits from short and long-term mangrove management

Mangroves are expected to keep expanding in some estuaries and harbours. There is lack of clarity around who pays and who benefits from any mangrove management. Any mangrove management actions are not a “one-off” exercise and will require regular and ongoing maintenance actions, therefore have ongoing costs.



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Air and noise

Te āngi me te harurutanga



Why is it important?

Air pollution and unreasonable noise in the coastal marine area can have adverse effects on coastal residents and visitors and indigenous biodiversity. Underwater noise such as seismic surveys or driving of piles can disturb or harm marine mammals.

Existing air quality in the coastal marine area is perceived to be high. It has many characteristics that are valued by the regional community, including amenity values (i.e. good visibility, air free of offensive smells), low contaminant levels, intrinsic values and life supporting capacity.

Similarly, activities that create unreasonable noise in the coastal marine area may impact on the enjoyment of coastal areas by other people. The implications of seismic and other noise generating activities on the marine animals must also be considered.

District councils manage air and noise on land adjacent to the coastal marine area, therefore consistency across boundaries is particularly important.

How is it currently being managed?

Management of air and noise in the coastal marine area is dealt with under Chapter 10 (Air quality and noise) of the *Waikato Regional Coastal Plan*. These provisions seek to ensure that the existing high air quality of the coastal marine area is maintained and recognises that the major source of contaminants are land based activities. In relation to noise, the coastal plan aims to manage noise levels in order to avoid disturbance to the amenity and wildlife values of the coastal marine area. This is done by ensuring the best practicable option is adopted to minimise the adverse effects of noise emissions on human health, amenity values and fauna.

There are no linked rules, however, as the plan relies on non-statutory methods to address these issues.

Land-based activities are a key source of air and noise emissions to impact on the coastal marine area, therefore, it is important that an integrated approach with regional and district plans is undertaken.

Additionally, for activities in the coastal marine area the provisions in the Resource Management (Marine Pollution) Regulations 1998 are considered rules in the current coastal plan.

What are the issues?

Identification of specific air quality issues that need to be managed in the coastal marine area

At present, there are no discharges to air in the coastal marine area which are known to cause significant adverse effects for human health, plants, animals and communities. There may be activities that need to be actively managed which have not yet been identified.

Noise thresholds have not been identified

The coastal plan has not identified acceptable noise thresholds for different areas of the coast and these will depend on the sensitivity of those areas. To date there has been no consideration of introducing regulatory measures as other approaches such as education have been considered to be sufficient. The appropriateness of this approach needs to be reviewed as part of the coastal plan review.

Consideration may need to be given to the impacts of underwater noise, such as seismic surveys or driving of piles on marine mammals.

Identification of specific noise issues that need to be managed in the coastal marine area

At present, there are no activities in the coastal marine area which produce excessive noise and have an adverse effect on human health, amenity values and fauna. There may be activities that need to be actively managed which have not yet been identified.

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He taiao mauriora

Healthy environment

He ōhanga pakari

Strong economy

He hapori hihiri

Vibrant communities

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