

Report on engagement feedback received on the Regional Coastal Plan review – Phase 1 and 2 September 2021

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Executive summary

Engagement has been undertaken with coastal communities and key stakeholders to identify challenges and opportunities with the implementation of the Operative Waikato Regional Coastal Plan (Coastal Plan). Having captured a large amount of feedback, staff have now progressed the issues identified through to options for policy direction.

The Social and Economic Science team has undertaken an analysis on the feedback received on the Regional Coastal Plan Review project, including more recent feedback on the Policy Direction papers.

The data analysis and report will be used to:

- Inform the drafting of objectives, policies and methods i.e. rules for the Coastal Plan review
- Inform the section 32 evaluation of the different topics for the Coastal Plan review
- Inform councillors on feedback that was received on the Policy Direction papers
- Provide a summary of the feedback on the webpage

This report provides a summary of the feedback received on the first two phases of the Coastal Plan Review, outlining the number of responses, the different topics that people commented on, and major themes in the feedback.

Engagement methods considered in this report include:

Engagement methods	Number of responses
Feedback forms	202
IRIS	6
Emails and letters	55
Face-to-face	157
Facebook comments	51
Total responses	471

The table on the following page outlines all the main themes and the number of mentions, in order of most to least.

	Main themes only - in order of most mentions to least	No. mentions
1	Ecosystems and biodiversity	112
2	Water quality	72
3	Disturbances of the foreshore and seabed	62
4	Open space and public access	62
5	Natural hazards	59
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The feedback expresses a range of environmental attitudes and accounts of the impacts of human activities on environmental values of the coastal marine area (CMA). Perspectives on what should be done to manage the CMA reflect that and range from clarifying rules and investing in monitoring and enforcement, to banning all activities that cause harm.

Different values are in conflict in the CMA such as the economic value of aquaculture and fishing and their capacity to provide local employment as opposed to social and cultural values linked to biodiversity, natural character and access that a number of responses suggest are undermined by such commercial operations in the CMA.

Ecosystems and biodiversity was by far the most common theme, with a range of different perspectives expressed that do not oppose each other but rather, value biodiversity in relationship to other values such as wildlife habitat, mahinga kai, water quality, natural character, tourism and recreation, environmental heritage etc. This suggests that other strongly held values are dependent on the value of biodiversity for their expression, and highlights the complexity of managing issues within the CMA and integration with the Regional Plan. The next four most mentioned themes also highlight crossovers in issues and interests, these themes

include water quality, disturbances of the foreshore and seabed, open space and public access, and natural hazards.

Responses when assessed as a whole represent a field of possibilities for regulating the CMA from reducing some current regulatory restrictions to imposing greater restrictions or prohibiting some current activities.

1 Background

In late-2019 Waikato Regional Council (WRC) commenced community engagement on the Regional Coastal Plan review under the Healthy Environments – He Taiao Mauriora Review project.

During 2020 feedback was sought from a range of stakeholders, iwi, agencies, industry and coastal users and residents. At the same time, Council staff compiled issues and identified gaps with the operative Coastal Plan. This feedback, along with statutory requirements, informed the options to address specific topics or issues. In March 2021, the Policy Direction discussion document (*Policy Direction Papers*) was prepared, and consultation on the Policy Direction papers was undertaken in May and June through inviting community and stakeholder feedback.

The *Policy Direction Papers* summarise statutory requirements, feedback to date, policy options and recommendations for 18 topics that will be included in the proposed Coastal Plan and will inform the drafting of the objectives, policies, and rules for the Coastal Plan review. *The Policy Direction Papers* were used to inform the public, iwi, local authorities, government department, relevant Ministers, industry groups and community groups on the different Coastal Plan topics and possible options to address the different topics.

The feedback will be used to understand whether the recommended options are appropriate or not, and provides an opportunity for people to share more detailed information on the topics to inform the policy development of the Coastal Plan review.

Engagement has included engaging directly with the public via:

- Two main web-based ‘have your say’ feedback initiatives
- Direct email campaigns
- Drop-in days across the region

Facebook comments shared on the ‘have your say’ announcements from the WRC Facebook page also form part of the analysis, as do IRIS requests and letters.

The feedback from these engagements has been analysed by the Social Science team.

2 How to read the report

The analysis undertaken uses a discourse analysis methodology which can provide an account of the range of perspectives expressed and identify broad themes. This type of analysis focuses on the relations between perspectives expressed in the responses, outlining how the full range of responses at times share the same patterns of concerns as well as identifying where and over what there is conflict between different priorities and values. In this way it offers an account of the broad features and relations between the viewpoints expressed by those who have engaged with Council during the first two phases of the Coastal Plan review.

The responses to WRC engagement are in the form of persuasive accounts of issues and solutions, descriptions of lived experience of current and past states of the CMA, objections to current practices and processes, and suggestions to improve current states.

The body of this report will focus on the themes in order of most mentioned to least. There will be an exploration of the main interests and concerns presented in the feedback, including quotes that are typical of the sentiments expressed.

It is important to note that themes are based on *content* i.e. if a respondent chose a particular topic but did not subsequently discuss that topic, the chosen topic was not themed. In general, individual responses addressed a number of the topics outlined in *Directions Papers* and thus they have multiple often cross-cutting themes.

Most of the Facebook comments were not relevant or not considered useful feedback e.g. ‘The link doesn’t work’ or complaints about Waikato Regional Council in a general sense.

The total number of themed *responses* is different to the total number of *respondents*. It is unknown exactly how many respondents there were, as several commented multiple times across differing engagements, for example, one respondent sent through 16 separate feedback forms to discuss different issues.

Feedback was guided by the issues identified in the Policy Directions papers and the options proposed. However, due to differing methods, timings of engagements, and how feedback was gathered, not all responses were responding to the same questions/interactions. This means that not all people commented on support or opposition to specific options laid out in the Policy Directions papers, and if they did, this was not always easily identifiable through clear data capture. For this reason, this report does *not* provide numbers of responses which agree or disagree with particular options or direction.

3 Themes

3.1 Ecosystems and biodiversity

The theme raised most frequently in the feedback was ecosystems and biodiversity with 112 mentions. Ecosystem health and biodiversity loss are also at the core of other matters raised in responses such water quality, aquaculture and fishery practices, sediment, mangroves, social values and mātauranga Māori. Relatedly a number of responses highlighted the difficulty of assessing the topics separately and drew attention to the inter-relationships and dependencies between them. For example:

“The pressures associated with biodiversity loss, activities on land and at sea, and climate change have many effects on coast and oceans. These issues are not isolated, but build on each other and lead to negative cumulative effects.”

“Identifying just significant biodiversity areas for protection and enhancement measures will likely speed the decline of supposedly non-significant biodiversity areas. Without a holistic view this system is doomed to fail.”

Biodiversity loss in the region’s CMA is reported in responses as loss of birdlife, fish and shellfish and mahinga kai. For example:

“Seabird life in and around the Tairua has decreased sharply over the last twenty years, with the large flocks of gulls and oystercatchers previously seen substantially reduced.”

A few responses note improvements in fish numbers in some areas including for example, Raglan harbour where local residents report restrictions on trawling have generated a fishery “bounce back”.

Responses frequently report the impacts of sediment loading of coastal rivers, estuaries and coastal waters degrading coastal habitats. It is widely understood by respondents that issues with sediment impacting on ecosystems and biodiversity are the result of land uses including farming, forestry and housing developments. Many responses seek restrictions on those activities and assert the necessity of alignment between the coastal and regional plans to achieve this.

“We would like to see the focus change in this next version of the Regional Coastal Plan so that the natural environment is front and centre, and that much more rigorous processes must be undertaken to allow anything in the CMA that would impact it.”

“No resource consent should be granted unless all appropriate tests and trials have been carried out – to investigate any possible adverse effect on the marine environment, the foreshore and seabed and on marine animals and plants.”

A number of responses describe negative impacts of commercial activities and to a lesser extent recreational fishing on the ecosystems and biodiversity. In particular, trawling but aquaculture, purse seining, dredging and sea bed mining are all identified as needing to be banned or more heavily regulated to maintain and restore biodiversity values. For example,

“Ban all destructive fishing practices like dredging and bottom trawling including the use of nets that so often not only remove the target species but also by catch that is more often destroyed entirely as part of this method”

“Provide better regulation to commercial operators who use the marine coastal environment to gain profit... Currently marine mussel farmers on the western side of Coromandel conduct themselves in a manner that sees pollution and littering of coastline which should never be allowed to happen in the first place”.

A number of responses called for Motiti style exclusion zones to restore biodiversity in the CMA across the region. Others call for extension of the no trawling zone to 4 nautical miles to protect wildlife and enhance biodiversity. Some mention their disappointment that *Seachange* has not been implemented. The permissiveness and lack of enforcement of current rules was frequently mentioned as contributing to biodiversity loss and social conflict between users.

“The rapid decline in marine species needs urgent action. Marine ecologists are calling for 30% of our marine area to be put into reserve and protected from all activities of fishing, mining, and other extractive industry, or we risk the total collapse of the life support systems of the ocean. Less than 1% of our ocean has any protection, this is not good enough.”

There were a number of suggestions about new or additional ways to comprehensively manage the marine environment and/or actively restore it e.g. more catch limits, fishing competitions becoming a regulated activity, commercial fishermen having to submit RMA applications, more marine protection areas including marine reserves.

It should also be noted that while some responses were clear about the causes of biodiversity loss and ecological functioning others expressed the biodiversity loss in terms of their experience of loss of social values and sadness over the loss of past states in which the CMA was

“full of life”. A number of responses called for *“strong action”* from WRC to *“take a stand for our oceans”* and act decisively to protect biodiversity values in the region’s CMA.

“WRC has a huge opportunity with its new powers to actually make a difference with Coromandel’s coastal environment including the implementation of a case study to create better biodiversity management”

3.2 Water quality

Across responses, 72 were concerned about water quality and adverse effects on aquatic life, mahinga kai and recreation. A majority drew attention to the impact of sewage on coastal water quality and biodiversity. This issue was of particular concern to tāngata whenua who identify this practice as culturally offensive. Many responses suggest banning sewage and stormwater outlets at the coast.

“The outlets are placed on beaches where people swim and paddle. We are pleased to see that the new plan will be revised to address the impacts of discharges and would like to see rules which govern the placement of stormwater drains and a requirement to filter trash and sediment before it enters the CMA.”

“I have noticed in recent years the need for a reticulated sewerage system in the township, as most of the sewerage/septic tank systems have failed or are failing and the overflow reaches the harbour one way or another”.

One response suggested rates rebates on composting toilet installation for coastal residents. Another suggests promoting land based circular sewage disposal systems that treat water as a resource rather than transport for contaminants.

One response raised the issue of faecal source tracking to respond to more localised issues around human waste in coastal river and stream outlets that end up in coastal waters. Also raised was the issue of sewage discharges from boats and the need for rules to be changed to restrict this as well as the need for more investment in enforcement of current rules. This issue also crossed over with the issue of moorings and marinas with some responses suggesting that marinas provide infrastructure for disposing of sewage on land and are therefore preferable to moorings.

Within a number of responses people sought clarification over whether the NPS-FM would apply to coastal and harbour margins and could resolve issues with domestic animals in the CMA and their impacts on for example, plantings and water quality.

3.3 Disturbances to the foreshore and seabed

Bottom trawling, dredging, and mining, were frequently mentioned and responses indicate a preference that these activities be restricted or banned altogether in order to protect life on the seabed. A couple of key suggestions include bottom impact fishing methods should require consent and be publicly notified, and that testing should be carried out first. Below are a couple of comments that reflect responses on this theme:

“A moratorium should be put in force immediately to prevent fishing methods that are known to damage ecosystems and indigenous biodiversity. This includes all bottom impact fishing methods such as dredging and bottom trawling. The state of the marine ecosystem has been degraded by these methods for decades. Bottom impact fishing methods should become a non-compliant activity that requires resource consent.”

Applications for the consent to engage in bottom impact fishing should be publicly notified. Until such consents are issued no further bottom impact fishing should be permitted."

"Option 2 especially get rid of bottom trawling and dredging by Commercial and recreational fishing as this has seen the most destruction of the seabed and has resulted in a now significant lack of sea shells on the beaches and total destruction of our sea floors and sea life."

Other concerns in relation to disturbances to the foreshore include concern about the impacts of vehicles and horse riding on foreshore habitat for organisms that are a food source for sea birds.

"Ban vehicles, horses and motorbikes from accessing the beach to allow marine life to flourish(meiofauna)."

"What is the effect of vehicles/horses on shellfish beds?"

A couple of responses caution Council about the provision of overly prescriptive rules which may restrict what are perceived as normal activities for work or recreation:

"From time-to-time livestock may temporarily enter the CMA. This may be necessary for a variety of reasons so we caution council against formulating unworkable rules that could restrict normal farming activities."

"If all bed disturbance is no longer permitted, it will be impossible to build simple structures like maimai (a fundamental part of gamebird hunting and already a permitted activity under rule 16.4.2 of the Coastal Plan), without requiring a resource consent."

3.4 Open space and public access

Increased use of the CMA is creating conflict between users competing for space. Several responses indicate concerns for safety in particular over the use of vehicles and jet skis. As mentioned above, there are those who want restrictions placed on vehicle access to the foreshore and usage in the water e.g. cars, motorbikes, jet skis etc and animals in the foreshore e.g. dogs and horses. For example:

"Since the increase of Jet skis and many boats coming into Te Waitere it is now of concern for swimmers and recreational boat users either launching or coming into the loading ramp is a hazard. I believe a dedicated area with warning signs need to be installed".

Other responses indicate generalised concern over competition for space and call for better planning to address safety and access concerns. For example:

"Cooks Beach has little Beach at high tide. Too many old tractors spewing out stinking fumes, they have right of way by self-entitlement, holiday times, no sand castle building on the beach. No driving on the beach at all please. Make Banks Street the access. The Purangi estuary is a fabulous place for children. Jet Skis should be banned from here, would love to see them banned altogether but that won't happen, just target tradesmen's vehicles."

However, other responses value vehicle access and horse-riding and argue that these activities have long traditions that underscore their right to continued access. For example:

“I am worried about how it wants to ban horses from the beaches. Where else in Waikato region and districts can we ride without traveling big distances to do recreational riding with friends. we as supposed to be being more savvy about our emissions”

“We should be cautious in setting out restrictions on access to the beaches. For instance, Hahei Beach and other beaches are used to launch boats from tractors. This should be allowed to continue.”

A number of responses advocate for increased access generally and for groups who currently experience restricted access such as disabled. On the whole responses are concerned with the intensity of use and competition for access as well as impacts on ecological systems.

3.5 Natural Hazards

Comments are supportive of a holistic approach to hazard management including a ‘mountains to the sea’ perspective that considers for example, solutions to river flooding and SLR together. The need for consideration of broader publics than those immediately impacted is also raised. Some responses suggest that flood protections should be discontinued and flood plains restored for improved biodiversity and hazard management outcomes. Some responses support the role of mangroves and reverting farmland back to wetlands as a natural way to respond to natural hazards in the CMA.

Some express resentment over the cost of flood protection being generalised while benefiting only a discreet number of ratepayers.

The issue of coastal armouring is polarised. While a number of people assert their right to protect their property from coastal hazards and want the councils to support this, others oppose armouring the coast to protect assets and question both the efficacy of the approach for protection and the consequences of coastal squeeze for the wider community. For example, one respondent had this to say,

“My concern about structures is that if they by their very nature are solid and so it reflects the power of the waves which drags the sand away from the base of the wall making the problem worse. ...Is the short-term benefit of protecting assets that have been built in the wrong places really the right move and should the wider public be footing that bill? This protection is just in our small window of time and is accompanied by the loss of access to our high tide beaches. As time goes on, do we continue to give up more beaches to keep more ill placed assets?”.

Another issue that was raised concerns maintaining levels of service (LOS) in a climate changed context. Maintenance of current LOS for coastal erosion, flood protection and drainage will be increasingly difficult as sea levels rise and flooding events increase in frequency. Maintaining current LOS in this context will require large scale investments that may maintain LOS for relatively shorter periods when compared to the longevity of past investments.

3.6 Social values and community involvement

Responses suggest the natural character, ecosystem health and biodiversity are valued as social and community assets. Responses express sadness and anger at the loss of biodiversity and degradation of the CMA and call for increased recognition of the social value of the CMA.

“While some values can be quantified and qualified from a scientific point of view, others such as social and cultural values may need input from the community themselves”

“many people particularly value the natural, undeveloped areas of the coastline, the peace, quiet and beauty of it, away from pressures of urban life and commercial activities.”

Social values, loss of biodiversity and public access are frequently connected with a large number of responses raising concern over degradation of coastal areas due to intensification of use. Concerns focus on restricted access due to competition for space and resources between commercial operators and recreational users.

“Place emphasis on providing access for local and rate payer rights to gather kaimoana for wellbeing over commercial interests for profit”.

“There should be no expansion of aquaculture on Eastern Side of the Coromandel Peninsular specifically none in Mercury Bay. The space should be available for all the public to use and the natural beauty of this coastline should be protected from the commercialization of the aquaculture industry”.

Competition for space *between* different recreational uses such as family beach goers, horse riding, vehicles and boats are also key concerns. A number of responses suggest that public access is becoming increasingly restricted by structures such as marinas, moorings and coastal armouring.

A number of responses assert the benefits of community and tāngata whenua involvement in developing local solutions such as a better-informed public and participation in the implementation of solutions and many respondents indicate their desire to be active participants in the decision-making process.

3.7 Aquaculture

Responses under the theme of aquaculture reveal tensions, with nearly as many generally supportive of aquaculture as those who are opposed to it and/or call for restrictions. In particular, responses reveal tensions between industry and general public/recreational fishers.

On one hand, many responses support an enabling planned approach to aquaculture and some refer to Sea Change - Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan. These responses call for flexibility and openness to growth in the industry, particularly in relation to climate change, the impact this will have and the need to adapt in ways that we may not be able to anticipate. There are calls to consider the positive sides of aquaculture, such as the ecosystem services provided by it e.g. mussel reef regeneration, improving water quality, and fisheries habitat. Exploration of other types of aquaculture is also called for, with a plea to not limit options at this stage as there is view that the current emphasis is too narrow and there needs to be more provision for oysters, seaweed, and land-based aquaculture.

“Scope for industry to reasonably initiate new aquaculture developments in future (outside of any areas that might be agreed to within the Plan as being “inappropriate” for aquaculture), in recognition that we cannot fully anticipate what the future needs of our industry might be.”

“We support in principle the consenting of existing marine farms providing those farms demonstrate that no adverse impacts have taken place during the current consent and that the farm has followed environmental sustainability practices. Additionally, it has to be shown that a priority has been to protect indigenous biodiversity and preservation of natural character as per policy 8 & 12 of the NZCPS 2010.”

“Creating more roadblocks for sustainable, growing companies who employ locally and give back to their communities is not the way to strengthen struggling regional towns like Kawhia.”

On the other hand, many responses called for mitigation against damage caused by the aquaculture industry as well as closer monitoring of both known or potential impacts e.g. plastic pollution, noise pollution, and the spread of marine invasive pests, and how these may impact ecosystems and biodiversity but also recreational fishing. Commercialisation of natural spaces utilised by the public recreationally was also frequently mentioned. While only a few responses oppose aquaculture outright, opposition to further growth of the industry and/or specifically in identified (or yet to be identified) significant natural areas, as well as calls for closer monitoring (as mentioned above) is more common. There are a few responses who do not accept the possible new aquaculture sites identified in Sea Change, and call on Council to prioritise biodiversity over aquaculture.

“With these farms expanding as they are, it's about time this issue was addressed, and these companies made to clean up THEIR mess, I can only assume they are making good profits while defacing the environment.”

“Pacific oysters have decimated other mahinga kai”

“Plastic pollution on Coromandel beaches from mussel ropes and associated materials is rife and a potential hazard to a range of marine life. Material should be biodegradable wherever possible, and should be traceable to its farm of origin if beachcast, and fines imposed for littering,”

“I believe the current measures to ensure potential adverse ecological effects associated with aquaculture are appropriately managed and monitored are insufficient, severely lacking in scientific baselines, and understanding around the real ecological impacts from marine farming”

3.8 Natural character and landscape values

“We would like to see the focus change in this next version of the Regional Coastal Plan so that the natural environment is front and centre, and that much more rigorous processes must be undertaken to allow anything in the CMA that would impact it.”

Most responses mention their support for preserving and enhancing the natural character of our coastline. Responses highlight the need to have a holistic view of the environment, and to focus on enhancing the natural character of *all* areas of the CMA. There is some concern over the regional plan vs coastal plan boundaries, in particular land use impacting the marine environment. For example:

“The pressures associated with biodiversity loss, activities on land and at sea, and climate change have many effects on coast and oceans. These

issues are not isolated, but build on each other and lead to negative cumulative effects.”

“I do appreciate that you are dealing with the mean high water mark and below, but what happens on the land has such an effect on the quality of water in areas such as estuaries that it should be taken into consideration.”

“The Policy Paper only addresses the management of discharges within the CMA, which are a small proportion of catchment contributions to coastal aquatic degradation. Land use has by far the biggest impact on Waikato harbours and restricting refuelling at wharves and sewage discharges are a distraction from poor land management.”

“The impact of land use on rivers estuaries and the nearshore environments cannot be decoupled, so policy to rectify land use issues needs to be firmly grounded in coastal policy.”

Assigning certain areas as Significant Natural Areas is supported in some responses as a way to protect them from some recreational activities and commercial development.

“set significance widely so that destructive fishing methods can be regulated”

Protection of surf breaks is mentioned several times, and also a few mentions regarding additional surf breaks being added to the list of those considered regional significant.

“Avoid adverse effects on surf breaks”

“wish to have regionally significant surf breaks that are identified and mapped in the Waikato Regional Council Technical Report 2017/19 inserted into the draft coastal plan as regionally significant”

3.9 Structures

Responses indicate the need for appropriate policy recognition of how structures can both restrict public access *and* contribute to recreational access such as moorings, marina, slipways (boat ramps), jetties, and wharves. For example:

“We strongly oppose the introduction of any artificial structures no matter the declared purpose e.g. boat ramps.”

“Wharves and jetties are necessary for recreation. The Coastal Plan needs to be amended to provide for this.”

Moorings and marinas in particular were commonly mentioned where the main interests/issues included the increasing occupation of space of moored vessels and the inappropriate location of marinas impacting the functioning of the CMA including adverse effects on public access and surf breaks. A number of responses oppose the increasing use of public space for private recreational access and/or access for some users who are effectively privileged by structures.

“Moorings should not be able to occupy more than 50% of the bay”

“Future marina projects in the region should be subject to much more rigorous analysis of their positioning to ensure good flow through and the least disruption to other users.”

“There should be some control over the proliferation of private wharves - not one wharf per property.”

“Limit the number of accesses for boat launching across beaches.”

Some suggestions for managing moorings include fore and aft moorings (known as trots) in place of swing moorings for space efficiency as well as shared moorings as a more efficient way to allocate mooring spaces.

“a new form of mooring noticed overseas. It is like a mini marina with a floating dock in the shape of a cross. Each arm of the cross provides a dock. The pontoon swings with the wind and all boats also face into the wind - minimising windage. This effectively puts 4 boats into only a little more space than one would need”

Responses on the topic of coastal erosion structures indicate a clear tension between those who support structures to protect their private properties or protect places they frequent e.g. rock wall at Mercury Bay, erosion protection for Raglan SLSC clubhouse and those who are concerned with the impacts of erosion control structures on public access. For example,

“Where you build a wall you basically commit to losing your high tide beach, which has repercussions for public access, and the more sea level rise we get the more time you have no beach. We choose to build, unwisely as it turns out, in a dynamic environment and now we are saying that we as current residents have the right to prevent the natural progression of our beaches by building walls to try to control Mother Nature and stop the sea in the place where we want it.”

“I live in a coastal area where hard structures have been in place for 100 years. I would like to see in the new proposed coastal hazard plan that historic existing sea walls can be maintained and upgraded if necessary.”

3.10 Biosecurity

Biosecurity issues of particular concern to respondents include undaria, fanworm, and saltwater paspalum. Most of the feedback for biosecurity is supportive of an integrated approach, working across organisations and documents.

“Having similar requirements in adjacent regions will assist in managing vessel movement between regions, and manage the risk of spreading organisms between regions.”

“We support the recommended approach of option 3 which is to use both the Biosecurity Act and the RMA to manage the introduction or spread of harmful marine organisms from vessel movements, vessel cleaning, structures, discharges and aquaculture activities.”

There are calls for more management and enforcement of biosecurity, and some calls for equity across activities and structures in the CMA, as it is perceived by some that aquaculture is treated as the only issue.

“The discharge of organisms from vessel hulls has not been enforced to date, this needs to change”

“We agree that efforts to control marine paspalum have been expensive and ineffective and are pleased to see a review of the need for resource consents to carry out this work.”

“Biosecurity is not just a matter for aquaculture. In most instances, aquaculture farms are a receiving environment of organisms introduced from other pathways. This aspect has not been recognised.”

“A more holistic approach needs to be taken to the management of biosecurity. The threat to aquaculture from other boaties and in particular recreational boaties needs to be explicitly addressed and monitored for compliance.”

3.11 Clarity, alignment, and compliance

Clarity, alignment, and compliance between information, agencies and groups was a strong and cross-cutting theme. Responses express frustration with regulatory agencies and documents that are not aligned. Many call for multi-agency cooperation to ensure consistency and compliance outcomes. For aquaculture there were often referrals to the RMA, NZCPS, Fisheries Act, Government’s Aquaculture Strategy, Māori Commercial Aquaculture Claims Settlement Act; for biodiversity the Hauraki Gulf Marine Act, NZCPS, NPS-FM, and soon to be operative NPS-IB were mentioned. A particular example mentioned in many responses was the implications of the Motiti decision for increasing Council responsibilities. In addition, multiple agencies with functional overlaps make it difficult for communities and groups of all kind to engage and participate in solutions.

“We believe it is crucially important that the CMA and the adjoining coastal land be managed in an integrated and holistic way. That the existing regulatory bodies plans work synergistically (TCDC, WRC, DOC) and that they give integrity to the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement.”

“we submit that the proposed Option 3 for water classification standards fails to recognise and give effect to the NZCPS, in particular with respect to river and stream discharges.”

“The Motiti case regarding Regional Councils controlling fisheries resource in the exercise of their functions under s.30 of the RMA – there is considerable uncertainty and risk in the interpretation of the extent to which councils can legitimately seek to impose controls on fishing under the RMA”

“Councils need to be aligned with each other, community and aligned with other RC (Auckland, BOPRC)”

Of relevance under this theme is also the need for clarity in definitions and further guidance on activities proposed in the Coastal Plan.

“The emphasis on aquaculture outside of outstanding “areas” is not consistent with references elsewhere to outstanding areas being defined by specific “characteristics and qualities””

“I particularly object to the vague policies describing future aquaculture developments. The WRC is recommending the following: “Provide for new

areas of aquaculture in line with Seachange“. But the WRC fails to explain what that means.”

There were also calls for more enforcement of rules:

“MPI not enforcing current rules around whitebait”

“Flounder netters not obeying the rules”

“Regulations are not followed more enforcement of current rules is necessary”

3.12 Spatial Planning

Spatial planning receives broad support as a means to address local differences and the dynamics between coastal issues such as access, marinas and moorings, and in particular, conflicts between commercial activities, recreational and social, and cultural uses including mahinga kai. For example:

“Future marina projects in the region should be subject to much more rigorous analysis of their positioning to ensure good flow through and the least disruption to other users. The process where a developer can apply for a resource consent for a marina to fit with existing land ownership means that marinas are not always built in the most appropriate places.”

Spatial planning for mangrove management is supported by several responses that suggest mangrove management should be considered on a case by case, basis in order to consider both the costs and benefits and give effect to the full range of community perspectives on the issue.

Spatial planning is sought to restrict housing development along the coast and in river and stream plains as a solution to sediment issues, erosion and sea level rise. Spatial planning is needed to avoid ecological harm and social and cultural conflict caused by aquaculture and commercial fishing operations. A number of responses called for these practices to be restricted and designated to appropriate spaces so that enough space is reserved for ecological health and restoration of the CMA and threatened species can have a chance to recover and relatedly to provide continued access to recreational users and protect social and tāngata whenua values.

3.13 Tourism and recreation

Tourism and recreation for coastal towns are particularly important, with access to beaches and recreational fishing for tourism mentioned regularly in the feedback. As mentioned in earlier themes, conflict between users competing for space is present in the feedback, and this includes competition between different activities and between humans and wildlife.

“I am a horse rider and I appreciate so much being able to ride on the beach at Miranda. I love that we have spaces for everyone to enjoy and share respectfully. I would love to think that one day perhaps the cycle trails would open to horse riders as well and that we could all learn to share and enjoy the amazing infrastructure and appreciate each other’s interests and hobbies rather than compete for its use.”

“Allocate harbour space for yachting, boat parks, fishing, ski lanes, kite surfing, kaimoana planting and harvesting activities ensure future supply.”

“JetSkis are uncontrolled and currently operate near and land on the beach all along its length. This presents a serious danger to swimmers and beach users, including many small children.”

[Suggest] “Interpretative signage to educate public/visitors about our wildlife, marine habitat and the need to be careful and look after our coastline.”

Tensions between local fishing and commercial fishing include concern that resources are being extracted and economic benefits do not benefit the local area. In addition, commercial fishers and non-locals (e.g. tourists) do not necessarily know or care for the area as locals do.

“From my observation intensive crayfish potting, commercial and recreational dredging, purse seining and bottom trawling has significantly impacted the local area. Very little economic and social benefit is seen locally.”

“Local residents and ratepayers basic human rights to gather food for ourselves from nature should come before companies harvesting to sell kaimoana for profit”

“The change to have different seasons for recreational and commercial has been detrimental for the fishery, as having recreational divers in the vicinity of the commercial boats used to keep these boats a little more honest.”

“Emphasis on creating a better environment that is more orientated around recreational use with benefits to the local economy not commercial with non-local interests”

3.14 Tāngata whenua/Mātauranga Māori

Most who commented under this theme voice the need to engage iwi and to recognise the relationship that tāngata whenua have with natural and physical resources of all kinds. Understanding and accepting this relationship as well as the historic significance is identified as necessary to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

“Te tiriti is not adequately recognised in planning instruments and there is a lack of understanding and respect for mātauranga Māori.”

This theme cuts across the majority, if not all, the other themes. Below are some quotes, with *some* related themes being: natural character and landscape values, historic heritage, water quality, and ecosystems and biodiversity.

“Tāngata whenua cannot move their activities away from their lands that have natural features that are valued by others to be outstanding land or seascapes.”

“1. Ensure that (a) there is acknowledgement that tāngata whenua have a birth right to their ancestral lands and waterways and (b) there is a commitment to work in a treaty compliant manner. Some spaces may not be suitable for recreational activities e.g. limestone stacks with crevice burials.”

“As tāngata whenua we find the discharge at sea to be particularly offensive; particularly in the vicinity of mussel farms.”

“Retain cultural use of rahui etc - maintain indigenous knowledge”.

There is much support for continued or further acknowledgement of tāngata whenua considerations both in terms of what is included in the relevant chapter, and again, in terms of engagement with relevant groups (whether iwi generally, hapu specifically, or specific industry groups e.g. aquaculture). However, there was some concern around lack of resourcing for iwi. Another key mention which reiterates the need to engage, is Council understanding where it is appropriate and inappropriate to try to manage matters of particular interest to tāngata whenua.

“Let Māori manage Māori land. It called rangatiratanga. Do not use crown process to interfere in the activities of tangata whenua.”

3.15 Sediment

Many responses identify the negative impacts of sediment for coastal and marine habitats. (Also discussed earlier in the ecosystems and biodiversity theme)

“more and more of the estuary is smothered by sediment, killing off the crabs and other invertebrates on which the birds feed. The constant dredging of the estuary also stirs up the sediment which coats and smothers feeding areas. We acknowledge that sediment is largely due to land based activities”

Suggestions were buffer zones for forestry as well as frequent mentions of the need for integration of the coastal plan and the regional plan to address the sediment impacts of land use in particular farming, forestry and housing developments.

3.16 Mangrove management

Responses reveal polarisation over the issue of mangrove management. That mangroves are opportunistic species that thrive as a result of sediment flows resulting from soil erosion associated with human activity particularly, farming and forestry, is widely understood. While there is general consensus over the need to regulate land uses to reduce sediment in order to reduce mangrove expansion, there is however, considerable polarisation over what action to take to manage existing mangroves. Some advocate for extensive removal of mangroves citing the issues they cause for recreational access and loss of habitat for wading birds. Others view mangroves as a first line of defence against sea level rise and as providing biodiversity habitat. These responses see mangrove removal as increasing sediment flows out to sea that can have harmful impacts on shellfish beds.

A number of responses support an approach to mangrove management that recognises their differential impacts in different contexts:

“different areas need different solutions as mangroves have both positive and negative effects”

“Ensure all interested groups are consulted with wider focus than only mangrove management”

“We do not advocate anything like the Mangrove Management Bill provisions proposed by TCDC, but do believe there is room for removal of

seedlings to a prescribed height as a permitted activity, particularly to control further spread. We would also support mapping of areas where mangroves need to be protected.”

Responses suggest that there is an opportunity for communities to move past entrenched conflict over mangrove management if all sides of the conflict can participate in the planning outcomes for their local context.

3.17 Air and noise

Air and noise is not one of the frequently mentioned themes. However, when mentioned the focus is mainly on issues of noise and concern over the impact of noise on marine life and humans e.g. from mussel barges, drones, and jet skis. There are a few comments around being careful with putting restrictions on noise that will impact recreational activities e.g. general fishing and shooting birds.

“Jet skis are noisy and disturb marine life and human peaceful enjoyment of the coastal areas”

“Skynight pollution and noise pollution (marine mammals)”

“We encourage the council to consider expanding the consideration of underwater noise to include requirements for activities other than seismic surveying.”

“Recreational fisher people are conscious to take all practical steps to ensure that noise from engines is not unreasonable. [We support that] the feedback in the Policy Directions papers does not identify an issue with recreational fishing craft and the recommended policy option does not propose associated rules.”

3.18 Process/other

This theme was cross cutting and serves the purpose of collating general questions people had about process of the Coastal Plan e.g. timing, consultation and also acts as a ‘catch all’ for comments that do not find a natural home anywhere else but we didn’t want lost. Note that more often than not, comments under this theme would be *part* of a response as opposed to a whole response, meaning other themes have been applied also.

“I was just wondering about timelines for the release of issue by issue discussion documents for the Coastal Plan review”

“We have a particular interest in the process used to identify areas of high natural character and/or with high indigenous biodiversity as well as outstanding natural features and landscapes.”

“Please provide update on the money (\$150k) put aside for the review of the Whangamata Harbour and catchment plan completed in 2007 and to be reviewed in 2017/18”

3.19 Historic heritage

Most responses where historic heritage is specifically highlighted are focused on archaeological sites. Māori historical sites being disrespected and/or misused is mentioned several times. Regarding historical sites as well as landscape values and relationships with the environment, there is concern regarding information being made public about particular sites, as reflected below:

[In regards to Historic heritage option 3, exception] “Not public information. While thousands of sites have been identified by archaeologists, many are known only to tāngata whenua and their whereabouts are not public knowledge due to grave robbings and other threats by artefact hunters. Council needs to work with tāngata whenua on provisions that recognise tāngata whenua sites, and rights to protect those sites. A generic identifier as that in the Operative Coastal Plan for ASCV areas may suffice”

“Need to record our history and stories back to our first iwi as well. Archaeological areas protected from being wrecked completely by human activity.”

There are also a couple of comments in relation to discovery protocol:

“The accidental discovery protocol should be included as a rule so that it applies to permitted activities as well as consented activities”

“In relation to discovery protocol please be advised of the unprotected and unrecorded wharf remnants present at the mouth of the Otama river.”

4 Conclusion

Responses indicate understanding of the integrated nature of the topics and how proposed solutions will have wider impacts and implications. While some responses express their individual preferences many others call for integrated collaborative management to address social conflict and restore coastal ecosystems.

A feature of responses on all topics is conflict over resources and space. Many responses recount examples of conflict between users for resources and/or place-based struggles for space. Their accounts also provide experiential evidence that activities in the region’s CMA are impacting negatively on the health of coastal ecosystems and biodiversity.