

16 Agency Responses - Legislative Initiatives

Environmental management

Auckland City Council, Auckland Regional Council and the Department of Conservation all have jurisdiction at Great Barrier. In addition the Hauraki Gulf Forum, a grouping of authorities, tangata whenua, and agencies, has a management and policy role in the Gulf and the catchments that drain into the Gulf.

The different agencies carry different statutory responsibilities but all have responded to environmental pressures with rules and policies to protect the unique nature of the island.

Auckland City Council (ACC)

Responsibility

The Auckland City Council is the territorial local authority governing Great Barrier Island, the largest of the 65 islands in the Hauraki Gulf it is responsible for. These islands total 75% of the City's land but only 2% of its people. Great Barrier Island alone is 44% of the City's land. Its population of 852 is 9.87% of the Gulf Islands and 0.21% of Auckland City.

The City maintains a centre with three full time and one part-time staff members at Claris. It manages the library, the roads, airfield and wharves, the rural fire service, and the morgue. It contracts out services for waste, road maintenance, parks and animal control.

Response

Under the Resource Management Act 1991, the Council is required to monitor the state of the environment, implement district plans and issue resource consents, and consequently produced a "State of the Environment" report in 2004, and reviews this each year. There is little in it specific to Great Barrier Island.¹

However, Auckland City clearly uses its Hauraki Gulf Island District Plan to protect the environment here: just over 60% of the land on Great Barrier Island is designated as either Sensitive Ecological Site (13993ha) or Sensitive Area (2535ha) (Fig. 6.2). This very high proportion illustrates the high value placed on this island with respect to its ecology.

Auckland Regional Council (ARC)

Responsibility

Under the Biosecurity Act 1993, the Auckland Regional Council is responsible for management of pest plants and animals in the Auckland Region. Every five years they review and reissue a Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS) to take effect for the following five years.

Response

During 1998/99, the ARC declared the Hauraki Gulf and all its islands, a 'Controlled Area' and now provide an inspection service for all buildings being transported into the Gulf to prevent the movement of pests.

A Memorandum of Understanding was developed by ARC and DOC late in 2008 for a programme of biosecurity management on Great Barrier Island and this provides the structure for collaborative work such as:

- site led pest plant control work, focusing particularly on climbing asparagus, boneseed, grey willow, kahili ginger, madeira vine, smilax, tree privet and woolly nightshade;
- a feral goat eradication programme (complete but now monitoring);
- eradication of Argentine ants (continuing);
- contingency actions for a range of pests include the provision of a shed with suitable equipment for responding to any suspected incursion and a Wharf Monitoring Programme contracted locally to monitor for the presence of Norway rats and mustelids at the Tryphena, Whangaparapara Wharves. Department of Conservation manages this at the Port Fitzroy wharf.

The ARC carried out rat eradication on the Broken Islands in 2009.

Between 2007 and 2012 the ARC intends to develop a Hauraki Gulf Controlled Area Biosecurity Plan to provide a framework within which the agencies will work togetherⁱⁱ.

Hauraki Gulf Forum

Responsibility

Great Barrier Island is within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. The marine park was created in 2000 with widespread community and political support. The Forum was created under an Act to promote and facilitate integrated management. Its membership comprises representatives of the Ministers of Conservation, Fisheries, Maori Affairs, the tangata whenua of the Gulf and its islands, and the 12 local authorities in the catchment. The purposes of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park are:

- to recognise and protect in perpetuity the international and national significance of the land and the natural and historic resources within the Park;
- to protect in perpetuity and for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of the people and communities of the Gulf and New Zealand, the natural and historic resources of the Park including scenery, ecological systems, or natural features that are so beautiful, unique, or scientifically important to be of national significance, for their intrinsic worth;
- to recognise and have particular regard to the historic, traditional, cultural, and spiritual relationship of tangata whenua with the Hauraki Gulf, its islands and coastal areas, and the natural and historic resources of the Park;
- to sustain the life-supporting capacity of the soil, air, water, and ecosystems of the Gulf in the Park.

The marine park includes the seawater, Crown-owned foreshore and seabed and conservation estate around the Hauraki Gulf, defined as the eastern coasts of the Auckland and Waikato regions extending to the outer limit of the territorial sea (12 nautical miles).

The Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act also requires councils with responsibilities within the catchments of the Gulf to give effect to management objectives designed to sustain the life-supporting capacity of the Gulf, in policies and plans prepared under the Resource Management Act. The Hauraki Gulf Forum has recently published guidance on these requirements www.arc.govt.nz/environment/coastal.../hauraki-gulf-forum

Response

The Forum is required to publish Hauraki Gulf State of the Environment Reports every three years, which collate information collected by different agencies and groups. The most recent, in 2008, noted that:

"The ecological potential of the two larger islands - Rangitoto-Motutapu and Great Barrier Island - has still to be realised, due to the presence of introduced pestsⁱⁱⁱ.

The report is concerned about water quality in the Gulf especially near-shore water quality. It notes that the 410,000 cows of the Hauraki Plains produce the same amount of faecal matter as a city of 6 million people, and heavy metals are a growing problem in Auckland's harbours.

The Hauraki Gulf Forum is working with the Department of Conservation and its other member agencies to achieve greater profile and appreciation of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park and is facilitating its geographic expansion through the inclusion of coastal parks and reserves in council ownership, and private covenanted land.

Vesting public or private land in the marine park does not change ownership or management responsibilities, but recognises that the land is managed in accordance with the purposes of the marine park.

Department of Conservation**Responsibility**

About 60% of the island is public land administered by the Department of Conservation with more than 16,000 ha of land in the public conservation estate. This represents 42% of the DoC Auckland Conservancy as can be seen in Table 16.1 below.

Table 16.1 Proportion of areas in Auckland Conservancy

Area	Hectares	% Auckland Conservancy
Auckland	8622.702	22.55
Great Barrier Island	16177.02	42.31
Warkworth	13432.84	35.13

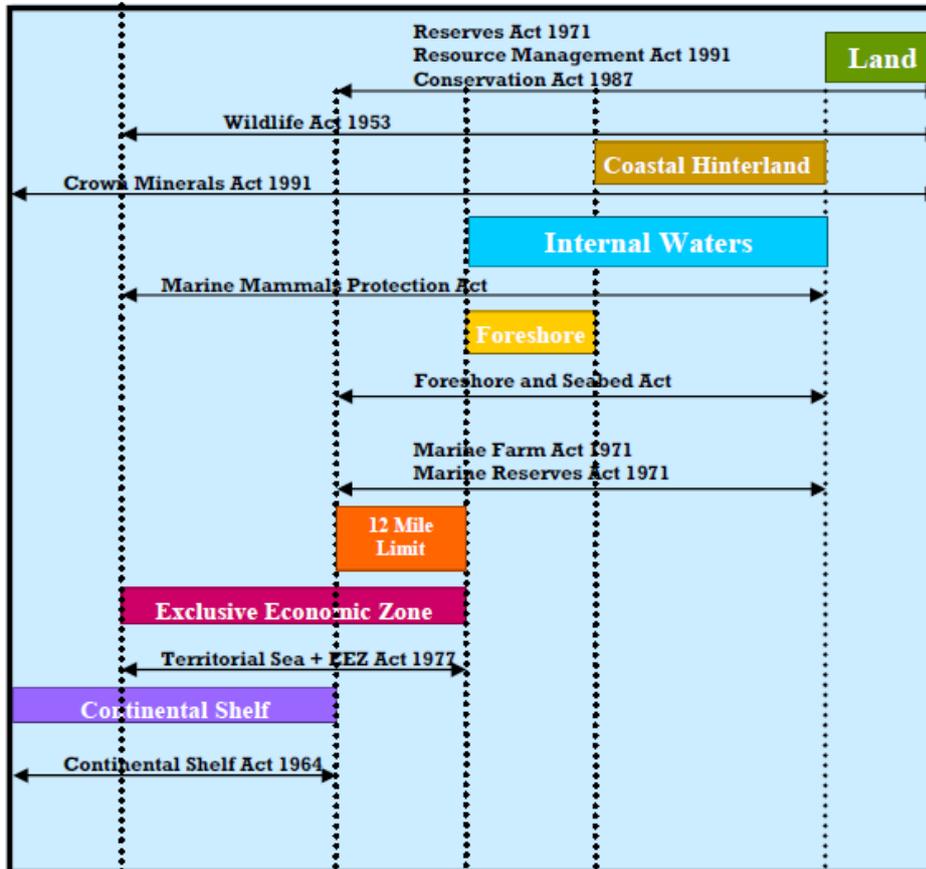
The Department employs eighteen permanent staff (17 fulltime and 1 part-time) and local seasonal staff who mostly reside in the northern settlements of Port FitzRoy and Okiwi.

The Department of Conservation is the leading central government agency responsible for the conservation of New Zealand's natural and historic heritage. Its main legislative mandate is the Conservation Act 1987 and other key statutes such as the Reserves Act 1977, Marine Reserves Act 1971, Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978, the Wildlife Act 1953 and the Wild Animal Control Act 1977. (Fig 16.1)

The Department currently has an Area office at Port FitzRoy employing about twenty people (16.4 full time equivalents). However this is likely to be reduced in 2010 when the Great Barrier Island office will probably become a 'field station' administered from Warkworth Area office. This move, presumably dictated by National policy changes aimed at cost reduction, seems to be in direct conflict with the departments stated claims that Great Barrier Island is a highly significant 'place' for conservation as stated in the Conservation Management Strategy.^{iv}

Considering its importance in terms of land management the Department of Conservation has a low profile amongst the local inhabitants. This is partly due to physical isolation at the north end of the island, confusion over its legislative role, opposition to some of its policies and proposals (e.g. The Marine Reserve) and an actively antagonistic press. This situation is unlikely to be improved by the recently proposed downgrading of the office status and moving overall administration off the island.

Fig 16.1 Schematic representation of jurisdictional boundaries of key statutes



Response

Great Barrier Island is Key Area 4 in the Department's current Conservation Management Strategy^v. The reasons given for this are:

- The largest island off the coast of the North Island of New Zealand
- Extensive indigenous forest habitats of outstanding significance
- Range and quality of freshwater and marine habitats
- Separate Ecological District
- More than 60 percent of island is formally protected and managed by the Department
- Opportunity to promote the conservation of outstanding heritage which is held in a mixture of private, communal and public tenures
- Length and extent of prehistoric human settlement
- The best assemblage in the region of historic features associated with the colonial exploitative period
- Two endemic species of flowering plant.

There are 46 separate areas administered by the Department. Land is held under the Reserves Act 1977 as Wildlife Management Reserves (2), Scenic Reserves (2), Historic Reserves (2),

and Recreation Reserves (11) and under the Conservation Act as a Sanctuary Area, an Ecological Area, Marginal Strips (11), a Conservation Area and Stewardship areas (15).

Overall picture

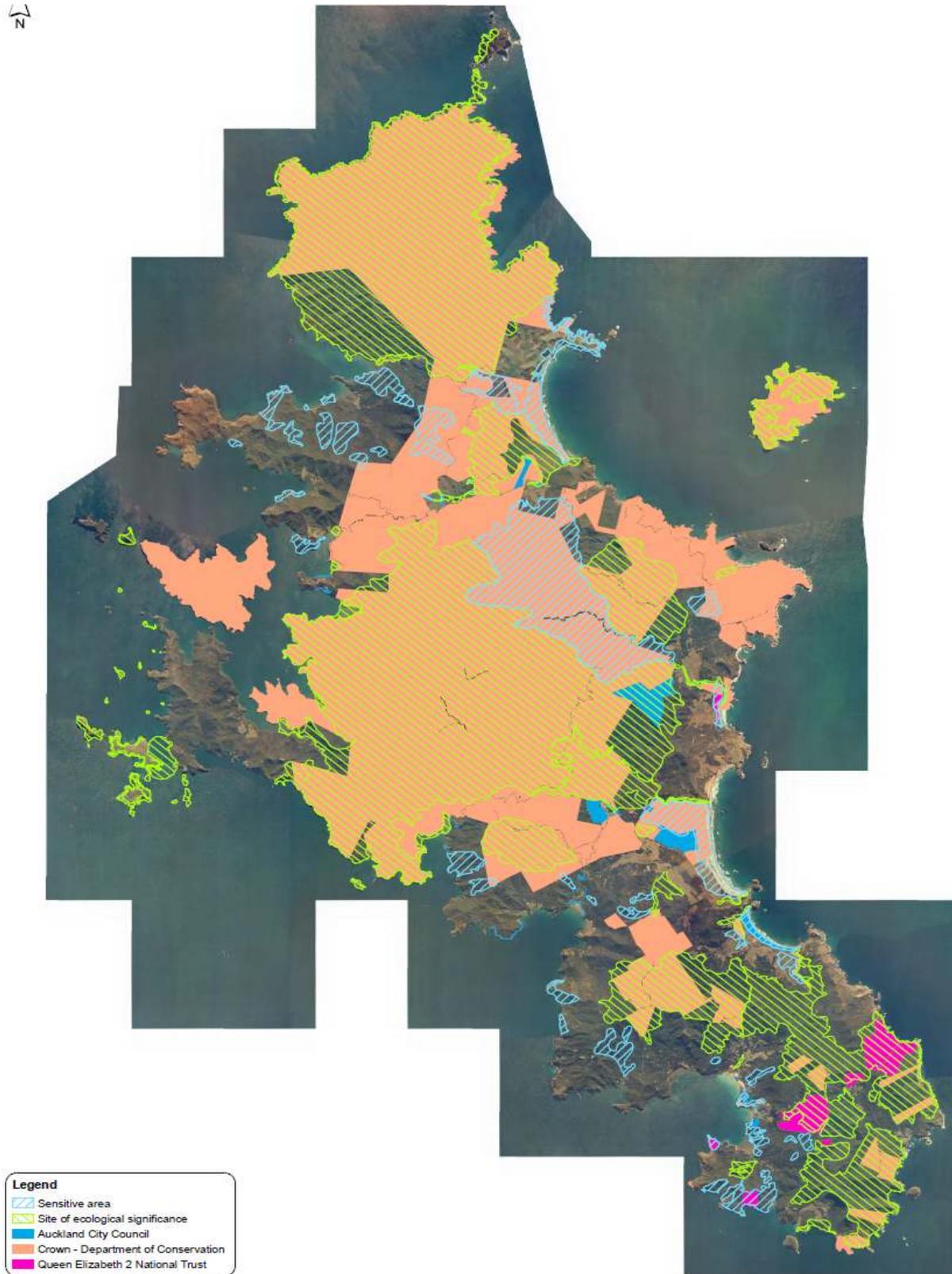
Considering the extent of publicly owned land, areas designated as ‘Sensitive Areas’ under the RMA, and additional private covenants, it is clear that a high proportion of the Great Barrier Island environment is legislatively protected. Fig. 16.2 (on the next page) shows Auckland City’s District Plan Sensitive Ecological Sites as a yellow grid, Sensitive Areas as a blue grid, the publicly owned land with DOC designated in orange and ACC in blue, and the private QEII conservation covenant areas added in pink.

While the extensive area of protected land can be celebrated, the current continuing decline of biodiversity demands a much more focussed and better resourced approach. The biodiversity chapters in this report show a continuing decline and degradation similar to the mainland decline, but perhaps running just a few years behind. Legislative protection has been in place for some time now but is clearly not enough to halt the downward slide of important species.

The real plight of the biota under the onslaught of rodents and feral cats still needs to be addressed by the relevant interested parties. Pigs are an issue that still needs to be researched and the impact of these animals on the land and the relationship with hunting needs to be looked into.

There is also a need for better protection of coastal areas and consideration of the varied impacts of development and tourism in an island context.

Fig 16.2 Auckland City, Department of Conservation and QEII protected areas



AGE

i Auckland City Council, *Our Changing Environment*, 2004/5

ii Auckland Regional Council, *Proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy 2007 – 2012*, 18 June 2007 revision

iii Hauraki Gulf Forum, *State of the Environment Report*, June 2008

iv Department of Conservation, *CMS Auckland 1995 – 2005*, p 77

v Department of Conservation, *CMS Auckland 1995 – 2005*, p 77