

Memorandum

28 February 2018

To:	All Councillors
Cc:	Jim Quinn, Chief of Strategy
Subject:	State of our Gulf 2017 – Hauraki Gulf – Tīkapa Moana / Te Moana-nui-ā-Toi State of the Environment Report 2017
From:	Dave Allen Manager, Natural Environment Strategy

Purpose

1. To provide key messages on the State of our Gulf 2017 – Hauraki Gulf – Tīkapa Moana / Te Moana-nui-ā-Toi State of the Environment Report 2017.

Summary

- The State of Our Gulf report, prepared by the Hauraki Gulf Forum will be publically released on **Friday 2 March at 10am.**
- The report uses a set of environmental indicators to catalogue the range of human impacts on the Hauraki Gulf, and concludes that, despite some successes, responses from resource management agencies are not keeping pace with the pressures and their impacts.
- Many of the identified issues that fall within Auckland Council's statutory obligations are actively being addressed by existing programmes and new programmes proposed in the 10-year Budget.

Context/Background

2. The State of the Gulf 2017 (the report) is the fifth state of environment report released by the Hauraki Gulf Forum, following its independent preparation. The Hauraki Gulf Forum is required to report every 3 years on the health of the Hauraki Gulf Tīkapa Moana / Te Moana-nui-ā-Toi and progress being made towards integrated management.
3. The report uses a 'pressure-state-response' approach to assess the range of pressures on the Gulf, how they impact its health, and what agencies are doing to address their respective environmental obligations.
4. Broadly, the report catalogues the range of human impacts on the Gulf, like urban growth, agriculture, fishing and pests, and measures the change in these using a set of indicators, which use data from a range of sources, including data supplied by constituent parties of the Hauraki Gulf Forum.

Discussion

5. The report broadly contends that responses from resource management agencies (including both local and central government), are not keeping pace with the pressures and their impacts in the Gulf. It highlights the ongoing degradation in the Gulf, which has been previously reported by Auckland Council through its regular State of Environment Reports, its other regular monitoring reports, and previous Hauraki Gulf Forum State of the Environment reports.
6. The report describes the agency constraints and barriers from improving their relevant responses as:
 - technical complexity,
 - commercial imperatives,
 - legislative conflicts, and
 - lack of funding.

7. As well as declining trends, the report recognises that some tangible progress has been made over the past three years. For example, nutrient loads for Hauraki Plains and heavy metal concentrations remain elevated, but there are signs of improvement at some locations. Terrestrial biodiversity values have rebounded as a result of pest eradication, revegetation and translocation efforts on the Gulf's islands and implementation of speed restrictions has brightened the outlook for Bryde's whales.
8. However, pressures are rapidly mounting as the population increases – demand for facilities, infrastructure and resources is pushing development towards the sea. Gains could easily be undone by new activities or by emerging effects of climate change.
9. The report states the lack of an accepted, holistic and integrated plan for the Gulf is one of the reasons why the pace of change is outstripping the ability of current management frameworks to respond effectively. It then states that SeaChange is a significant step forward for moving beyond current state, but the summary document identifies that it is not the silver bullet for everything.

Auckland Council Response

10. Many of the identified issues that fall within Auckland Council's statutory responsibilities, such as reduced water quality from stormwater and wastewater overflows, marine biosecurity, sediment run off from land, and protecting biodiversity, are actively being addressed by Auckland Council through existing programmes and new programmes proposed in the 10-year Budget.
11. The Auckland Unitary Plan, Operative in Part since November 2016, provides a framework for managing environmental effects which aim to achieve better outcomes.
12. The Auckland Plan 2050, which sets the strategic direction for Auckland, also supports improving the health of our environments, while balancing other priorities. It recognises the decline in natural environments and aims to better integrate growth with protecting the environment. Both the 10-year Budget and Auckland Plan 2050 will be available for public consultation between 28 February and 28 March 2018.
13. Two new targeted rates are proposed in the 10-year Budget, for Natural Environment and Water. If these new targeted rates are introduced, they will provide significant additional funding to support better outcomes in the Hauraki Gulf.
14. The Water targeted rate provides funding for five initiatives to improve water quality in catchments draining to the Gulf:
 - a stormwater improvement program will reduce combined sewer overflows to the Waitemata Harbour and Gulf,
 - a contaminant reduction programme, aims to reduce sediment, litter and road contaminants, through improved treatment methods,
 - an urban and rural stream rehabilitation programme will support ecological health, and reduce sediment delivery to the Gulf,
 - a proactive compliance programme for onsite wastewater systems (septic tanks) to ensure maintenance and reduced contamination of streams and beaches,
 - an illicit discharges programme, aiming to reduce illegal connections to the wastewater network, aiming to reduce SafeSwim non-compliance alerts.
15. The Natural Environment targeted rate focuses on tackling kauri dieback disease and improving environmental protection and enhancement through control of pest plants and animals. It also provides additional funding for marine ecology assessments and improved marine biosecurity programmes.
16. Two other council plans will be consulted on between 28 February and 28 March 2018:
 - the Regional Pest Management Plan, which outlines how council will manage pests in the environment, including, further efforts focused on the Hauraki Gulf islands,
 - the Waste Management and Minimisation Plan, will help Auckland deliver waste reduction targets, and minimise the environmental impact of waste.

Next steps

17. The report provides further input into council consideration of priorities for addressing environmental outcomes affecting the Gulf in conjunction with other agency activity. Within Auckland Council, there are a number of other initiatives underway that need to be assessed for their collective contribution to the Gulf's environmental health.

18. For further information, please contact:

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