

Proposed Waikato Regional Coastal Plan Change

Aquaculture Legislation Amendment Bill (No 3)

This sheet provides information on changes to the Waikato Regional Coastal Plan proposed in the Aquaculture Legislation Amendment Bill (No 3).

Further information on planned changes to the way marine-based aquaculture is managed in New Zealand is available on the Ministry of Fisheries' website at www.fish.govt.nz. This includes:

- » Information sheet 1: Aquaculture Legislation Amendment Bill (No 3) – Overview of the reforms
- » Information sheet 2: Planning and consenting
- » Information sheet 3: Undue adverse effects on fishing test
- » Information sheet 4: Delivering the Māori Commercial Aquaculture Settlement
- » Information sheet 5: Implications for existing industry and applicants

Why do the existing plans need to change?

Information sheet 2 explains some of the proposed changes to the Resource Management Act 1991. One of these is the intent to change some provisions in the Tasman and Waikato regional coastal plans through the Aquaculture Legislation Amendment Bill (No 3). Under the Bill proposed changes to both plans will go into effect as soon as the legislation is passed.

These two plans define areas where aquaculture can be undertaken, but currently limit the species that can be farmed. Removing the limitation on species is the most immediate and significant opportunity to stimulate investment and growth in aquaculture in these two regions.

What does the Waikato Regional Coastal Plan currently contain?

The Waikato Regional Coastal Plan allows people to apply for consents to farm filter-feeding shellfish on longlines and oysters on inter-tidal racks, for spat catching and for shellfish research. Its rules also cover existing marine farm structures. All other marine farming is prohibited.

Essentially, the plan means only filter-feeding shellfish can be permanently farmed in the region.

As well, the plan restricts marine farming to specific places. Mussel farming can only happen in the Wilsons Bay Zone and on current farms, and no farm extensions are allowed.

What changes are proposed in Waikato?

The changes being proposed will allow applications to farm a wider range of species in existing aquaculture space than is possible at present. Changes are also proposed to allow existing marine farmers to apply for small extensions to their farms.

Farming different species

The restriction on which species can be farmed is proposed to be lifted by inserting a new rule in the regional coastal plan. The new rule will allow existing farms to convert to new types of aquaculture, such as fish farming. It will also allow applications to establish fish farms in Wilsons Bay where there is available unused space. Consent applications will be subject to the normal processes.

The proposed amendments to the plan recognise that farming species other than filter-feeding shellfish can have different environmental effects because they put feed, medicine and other compounds into the water. The amount of 'fed aquaculture' in

the semi-enclosed waters of the Firth of Thames will therefore be restricted. The maximum amount of nitrogen that may be discharged into the Firth from finfish farming will be 300 tonnes per year. This is likely to allow approximately 40 hectares of fed aquaculture, depending on the species being farmed. Because space will be limited, the council will tender the ability to apply for consents, and farmers will have to hold a discharge permit, as well as the normal coastal permits required for other types of marine farming.

As well as allowing a wider range of species to be farmed in existing aquaculture space, new space will be available for oyster farms. Marine farmers in the Waikato will be able to apply for consents for inter-tidal oyster farms throughout the region subject to the provisions of the regional coastal plan. This is a result of removing the requirement that means aquaculture can only take place within aquaculture management areas (see Information sheet 2).

Extensions to marine farms

The proposed plan changes will also allow applications to be made for small extensions to existing mussel farms that are outside the Wilsons Bay Zone. A 'small' extension is one that adds one hectare or 10%, whichever is greater, to an existing farm's area. It is proposed to only allow one extension to a farm to be applied for every five years. This affects about 40 mussel farms, the largest of which is 22 hectares in size.

The information required for consent applications for small extensions and changing species is set out in a new schedule for baseline survey and monitoring which will be added to the Waikato Regional Coastal Plan.

What will not change in Waikato?

No changes are proposed to existing restrictions on where marine farming can happen.

The proposed plan changes have been written to fit within the existing plan provisions, generally maintaining the approach the council has developed to manage aquaculture activities.

What next?

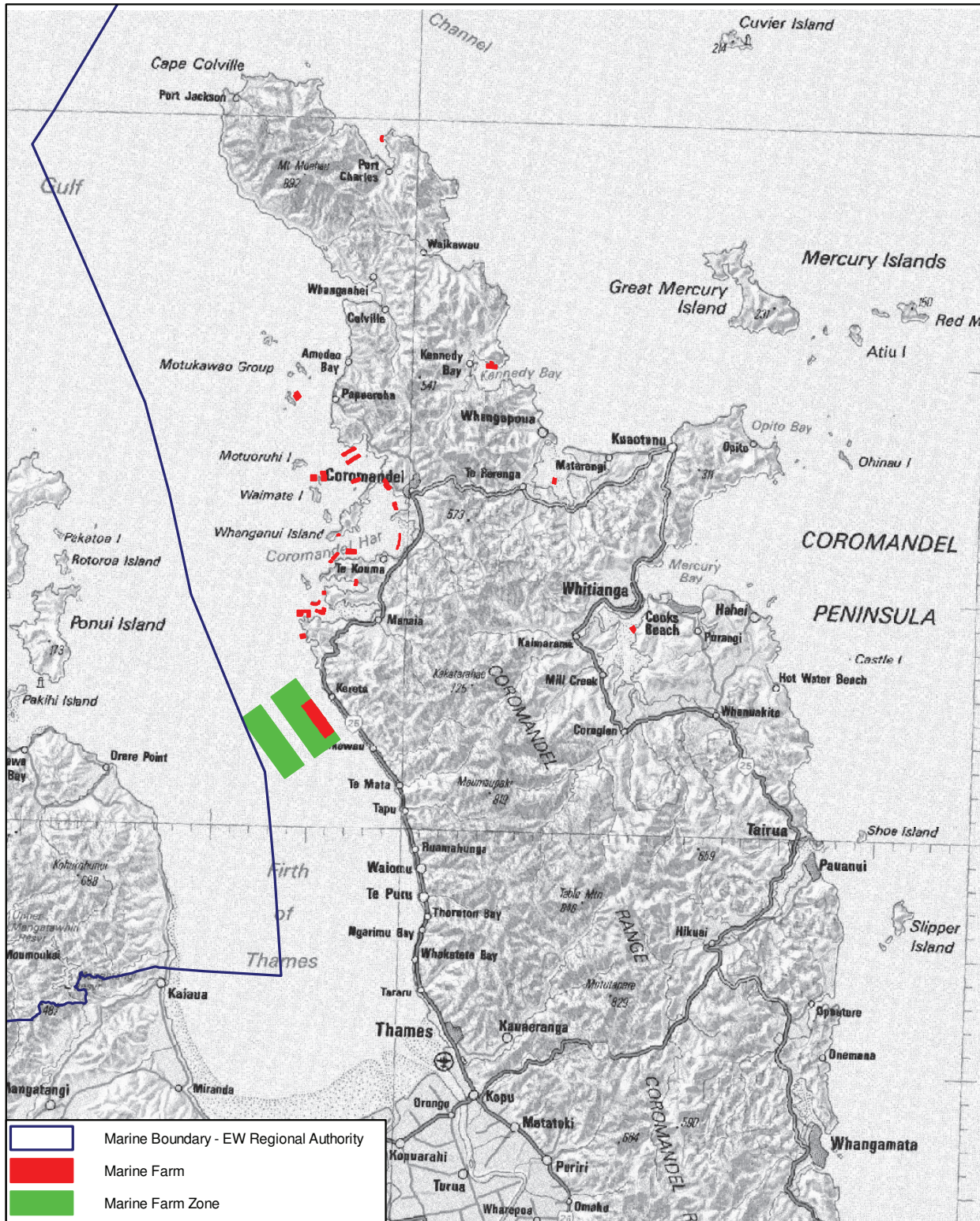
The Aquaculture Legislation Amendment Bill (No 3) was introduced to Parliament on 9 November 2010 and has been referred to the Primary Production Select Committee which will examine the Bill in more detail.

Have your say

Information on the Select Committee process, including how to make a submission on the Bill, can be found at www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/. The closing date for submissions is Friday 11 February 2011.

Where to find out more

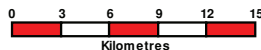
Information on the aquaculture reforms, including a link to the Aquaculture Legislation Amendment Bill (No 3) and marked-up copies of the Waikato Regional Coastal Plan showing the proposed changes, is available at the Ministry of Fisheries' website www.fish.govt.nz and at www.aquaculture.govt.nz.



Thames to Cape Colville Marine Farms

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This map shows the old regional council boundary and is currently being updated.