

# Marine Policy

## Vision

**The life force and life-supporting capacity of the ocean are vibrant and vigorous. All human relationships with the marine realm are regenerative of nature and people.**

## Summary

Making use of our greatest ally, Te Ao Tūroa, the long-standing natural world, through active kaitiakitanga practice and precautionary, adaptive, integrated stewardship, is essential in caring for all coastal and aquatic ecosystems. Doing all we can to support a naturally regenerating ocean is essential - for its health, for all that it gives us, and for the fundamental role it has in enabling climate stability. The Green Party will promote Tiriti-based governance of the seas of Aotearoa New Zealand that works to measurably regenerate mauri, prevent damage from human activities, increase resilience to climate change, and enable thriving marine ecosystems that underpin a healthy, well-managed blue economy.

## Values and Principles

- *Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi:* Kaitiakitanga, led by tangata whenua, should guide our relationship with the sea, ensuring it is better cared for. Māori regard all life forms within Te Ao Tūroa as taonga and require appropriate consideration as ordained by kawa, and determined in tikanga.
- *Ecological Wisdom:* Regenerating ocean ecosystem health is paramount for humanity to thrive in generations to come. The mauri, mana, and tapu - the intrinsic vitality, potency, and sanctity of the ocean and all who dwell within and around it are fundamental to the enduring life-support system that is our planet Earth. Indeed, honongatanga - interconnections between species, whanaungatanga - connections within species and further indigenous frameworks hold critical perspectives that can ensure we not only have enough fish to fish, but also help us to address the climate and biodiversity crises.
- *Social Responsibility:* We should equitably provide for the sustainable livelihoods and recreational and spiritual opportunities valued by New Zealanders that healthy oceans and coasts offer.
- *Appropriate Decision-Making:* A range of different interests at both local and national levels must be involved in decisions made concerning coastal and marine management. Decisions must include consideration of the needs of future generations and the entire environment.
- *Non-violence:* Human activity in the marine environment should be restorative, not harmful, to the intrinsic mauri, mana, and tapu of those in the marine environment.
- *Urgency:* Given the biodiversity crisis, declining health of ocean ecosystems and climate change impacts such as acidification and increasing sea temperatures, significant

increases in investment and pace of implementation are urgently needed to regenerate coastal and marine ecosystems.

- *Interconnection: Ki uta ki tai* - from the mountains to the sea. Marine management requires integrated management of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems including the vital role of Hine-Tu-I-Te-Repo, swamps, in our coastal wetland and estuarine zones. The health of people, land, and our oceans are inextricably linked.

## Strategic Priorities

The Green Party's strategic goals include:

*"All our waters will be in transition to becoming clean, and able to support healthy ecosystems.*

*All native species and their habitats will be thriving or on a path to recovery in terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments.*

*Our laws and practices will respect the biological integrity of all life while prioritising the health of indigenous species and ecosystems.*

*The customary and decision-making roles of whānau, hapū and iwi will be integral to decisions about resource use.*

*Decision-making about resource use will provide for community participation and environmental justice."*

Actions from this policy that work towards these goals include:

- 1.1 Establish a well-resourced and politically independent Ocean Commission to develop and establish Te Tiriti-based ocean governance of our entire marine area, including the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and to advise Government on legislative, policy and institutional reform.
- 2.1 Reform fisheries and marine protection legislation and establish a national, comprehensive, and coherent system of no-take, marine protected areas.
- 2.4 Resource mātauranga Māori organisations and promote the use of marine cultural health indices to empower community action and well-being to inform policy, management, and operations.
- 4.1 Halt any further degradation of marine and estuarine habitats through the extraction of natural resources, destructive fishing practices or inappropriate construction of our built environments.
- 5.1 Phase out bottom trawling, prioritising seamounts and areas with high levels of sequestered carbon and biodiversity for protection.
- 5.4 Enable kaitiakitanga, including upholding and underpinning Māori fisheries rights in the transition of the QMS to an ecosystem-based management.

## Connected Policies

This policy is one of several Green Party policies that focus on [Environmental Protection](#). The mauri of the oceans is also connected to human activity on land, notably [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#), [Forestry](#), [Housing and Sustainable Communities](#), [Transport](#), and [Waste and Hazardous Substances](#). [Climate Change](#) is also an important connection.

## Policy Positions

### 1. Te Mana o te Moana and Governance

#### *Issues*

Marine environmental management in Aotearoa New Zealand is complex legislatively, regulatorily and practically, and existing frameworks are inconsistently applied. The Māori Fisheries Settlement underpins the Māori economy, but tangata whenua currently have no formal leadership role in ocean management. A lack of up-to-date knowledge about the health of marine environments undermines management planning and operations to address marine issues. The challenges marine environments face are complex, requiring a holistic understanding of the interacting stresses on ecosystems and species.

#### *Actions*

- 1.1. Establish a well-resourced and politically independent Ocean Commission to develop and establish Te Tiriti-based ocean governance of our entire marine area, including the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and to advise Government on legislative, policy and institutional reform.
- 1.2. Increase funding to support innovative, regenerative marine initiatives, including by iwi and hāpu and community organisations.
- 1.3. Establish an Ocean Ministry to implement integrated marine management including:
  - 1.3.1. Implementing Te Tiriti o Waitangi-based policy and operational management;
  - 1.3.2. Enabling kaitiakitanga and the application of mātauranga Māori for all marine activities;
  - 1.3.3. Contributing to a National Waterways Restoration Strategy, updated national policy direction such as the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement and Freshwater Management Policy Statement to improve the water quality of waterways, harbours and estuaries from whole-of-catchment issues in conjunction with local and regional councils, Ministry for the Environment and the Department of Conservation;
  - 1.3.4. Developing and implementing regenerative, ecosystem-based fisheries management plans incorporating mātauranga Māori and western science, in partnership with mana whenua and with fair participation in the process by all stakeholders and the public;
  - 1.3.5. Monitoring and enforcing policy, management, and regulatory implementation;
  - 1.3.6. Establishing a Marine Research Council and ensure it is adequately funded to modernise marine science and inform fisheries management to be future fit, integrated, and enable the appropriate use of both mātauranga Māori and western science;

- 1.3.7. Working with other agencies to develop core environmental and cultural health indicators (see our [Environmental Protection](#) Policy) and using these to deliver regular and robust ocean and marine ecosystem status and state of the marine environment reports;
  - 1.3.8. Establishing environmental and ecological limits that trigger immediate and automatic regulatory action if exceeded; and
  - 1.3.9. Exploring with mana whenua the possibility of rights of, and personification, of the ocean around Aotearoa.
- 1.4. Retain Aotearoa New Zealand control and utilisation of our fisheries.

## **A. International Commitments**

- 1.5. Back a strong Global Oceans Treaty.
- 1.6. Support our Pacific Island neighbours in their leadership on the protection of the marine environment including:
  - 1.6.1. building resilience to climate change;
  - 1.6.2. ocean ecosystem regeneration;
  - 1.6.3. a moratorium on seabed mining in international waters;
  - 1.6.4. halting seismic prospecting techniques;
  - 1.6.5. protection of at least 30% of Te Moana-nui a Kiwa from fishing, and extraction; and
  - 1.6.6. protection of seamounts, by banning bottom trawling on them.
- 1.7. In consultation with tangata whenua, ratify outstanding international marine agreements.
- 1.8. Advocate for the international protection of endangered marine species on the high seas including advocating for the International Whaling Commission to become an international organisation with universal membership and a mandate focused on cetacean (whale and dolphin) conservation (see our [Global Affairs](#) Policy).
- 1.9. Ensure all relevant national legislative and regulatory frameworks are aligned with international marine commitments and obligations and require and resource their enforcement.

## **2. Marine Biodiversity, Regeneration and Resilience**

### *Issues*

The state of the environment and the pressures upon it indicate that humanity must fundamentally reset its relationship with the natural world and foster regeneration in ourselves and nature. Loss of coastal ecosystems, physical disturbance and damage, and fishing catch levels that are not ecosystem-based, risk the health of marine ecosystems for future generations, livelihoods and rural food security. They also risk undermining Māori fisheries settlement rights, both customary and commercial, and therefore the Māori economy.

## *Actions*

- 2.1. Reform fisheries and marine protection legislation and establish a national, comprehensive, and coherent system of no-take, marine protected areas, covering an area of at least 30% of the Aotearoa New Zealand territorial sea and at least 30% of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), with the target percentage and design founded on regenerating mauri and underpinned by mātauranga Māori.
- 2.2. Resource a nationwide mauri-based spatial design for marine and estuarine ecosystem regeneration that incorporates mātauranga Māori, and indigenous ecosystem management tikanga such as taiāpure, mātaimai and rāhui.
- 2.3. Support the application of tikanga Māori such as rāhui, mātaimai, taiāpure and community-based regenerative activities, aiming to restore mauri within marine and estuarine ecosystems.
- 2.4. Resource mātauranga Māori organisations and promote the use of marine cultural health indices to empower community action and well-being to inform policy, management, and operations.
- 2.5. Restore marine flora (salt marshes, mangroves, seagrass, seaweeds and marine sediments), including as 'blue carbon' initiatives (see Section 3).
- 2.6. Advocate for the maximum possible protection of Marine Threatened Species by:
  - 2.6.1. Developing species recovery plans covering all threatened marine and migratory species (see our [Conservation](#) Policy);
  - 2.6.2. Opposing all commercial and research-oriented whaling, and supporting South Pacific and regional whale sanctuaries; and
  - 2.6.3. Working internationally and domestically for zero fisheries by-catch of seabirds, turtles, and marine mammals including through stronger regulation of fishing practices and temporary closure of problem fisheries. Prohibit the holding of marine mammals in captivity except as part of an approved threatened species recovery strategy.

## **3. The Marine Environment in a Changing Climate**

### *Issues*

Climate change further threatens indigenous marine species and ecosystems. It shifts the natural population range of some species, often with unpredictable and cascading ecological consequences. Global warming is also causing algal blooms, deoxygenation and species loss. The increasing levels of carbon dioxide absorbed by the ocean cause acidification, which affects marine species' ability to build shells and skeletons, including plankton, which are the foundation of marine food webs. Finally, melting arctic and Antarctic ice sheets are now affecting ocean currents critical to climate moderation.

### **Actions**

- 3.1. Fully incorporate the role of a regenerating ocean in the national strategic response to climate change.

- 3.2. Ensure there is room for coastal and estuarine ecosystems to move inland with rising sea levels by protecting buffer areas from subdivision and development.
- 3.3. Enable resilience and adaptation as marine ecosystems move and adapt to climate change.
- 3.4. Urgently research and address the impacts of climate change on threatened marine species, prioritising those endemic to Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 3.5. Develop national blue carbon calculation and assessment capability (including marine flora regeneration, marine permaculture, and polytrophic aquaculture) and include blue carbon in the Emissions Trading Scheme.

See also our [Climate Change](#) Policy for actions to address the causes of climate change.

## **4. Marine Damage Prevention**

### *Issues*

Marine pollution ranges from micro- and macro-plastics to chemicals and wastewater carried into the sea by rivers and failing water infrastructure. Bio-accumulation of micro-plastics, heavy metals, and pollutants have been recorded in fish, shellfish, seabirds, marine mammals, and humans. The long shape of the country, its position between significant oceans and the Tasman Sea, soil types, and poor land use practices all contribute to very high levels of coastal sedimentation, which smothers coastal habitats. Sediment is also continuously resuspended by bottom-contacting fishing gear and sea-mining activities which choke marine life. This is exacerbated by coastal and urban flooding.

### *Actions*

- 4.1. Halt any further degradation of marine and estuarine habitats through the extraction of natural resources, destructive fishing practices, pollution (point and non-point sources), coastal dumping, or inappropriate construction of our built environments or poor land use practices.
- 4.2. Restore waterways to reduce inbound sediment to estuarine and marine environments (see our [Environmental Protection](#) Policy).
- 4.3. Prohibit seabed mining, and seismic prospecting for oil and gas within Aotearoa New Zealand's territorial sea and EEZ.
- 4.4. Reduce the risk of pollutants entering aquatic ecosystems by:
  - 4.4.1. Minimising and effectively managing plastic and toxic waste, including banning single-use plastic bottles and creating Container Return Schemes (see our [Waste and Hazardous Substances](#) Policy);
  - 4.4.2. Protecting aquatic ecosystems from pollution from landfills and contaminated sites vulnerable to coastal erosion and flooding;
  - 4.4.3. Ensuring urban areas and their infrastructure, including stormwater and sewage facilities, are resilient to rising sea levels and more extreme rainfall events (see our [Climate Change](#) and [Housing and Sustainable Communities](#) Policies); and

- 4.4.4. Ensuring that primary industry activity is regenerative (see our [Freshwater](#), [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#), and [Forestry](#) Policies).
- 4.5. Enforce international maritime pollution legislation (MARPOL), to which Aotearoa New Zealand is a signatory.
- 4.6. Ensure good access to emergency measures in Aotearoa New Zealand waters so that rapid action can be taken in response to the grounding of or oil spill from any large vessel.
- 4.7. Exclude from sensitive marine environments ships that carry significant amounts of oil, and require oil and chemical tankers entering Aotearoa New Zealand's territorial waters to be double-hulled.
- 4.8. Require marine-based industrial activities to pay a bond covering predicted and potential decommissioning and restoration costs, before operations commence.
- 4.9. Increase funding for marine biosecurity operations, including risk assessment, surveillance, and incursion response (see also our [Conservation](#) Policy).
- 4.10. Research and develop the feasibility of wave and tidal energy systems for utility-scale and micro- (community) scale, considering any environmental impacts they may have and avoiding significant marine habitats (see also our [Energy](#) Policy).
- 4.11. Ensure that the shift of road freight movements to coastal shipping (see our [Transport](#) Policy) is done without environmental or ecological harm.
- 4.12. Support research and development of zero-emission ocean freight.

## **5. Fisheries and Aquaculture**

### *Issues*

Aotearoa New Zealand fisheries management has not kept pace with international developments to ensure effective marine protection and sustainable fisheries management including ecosystem-based and/or indigenous approaches to management. Across many species, fish numbers and fish sizes are declining. Bottom trawling and dredging destroy sensitive ecosystems and, according to emerging research, release carbon sequestered in ocean sediment.

### *Actions*

- 5.1. Phase out bottom trawling, prioritising seamounts and areas with high levels of sequestered carbon and biodiversity for protection.
- 5.2. Enable kaitiakitanga, including upholding and underpinning Māori fisheries rights in the transition to ecosystem-based management.
- 5.3. Review, rewrite and update the Fisheries Act 1996 to enable ecosystem-based management of all fisheries.
- 5.4. Transition the Quota Management System (QMS) to an ecosystem-based approach that enables the interactions of all species, their environment, and the interactions between trophic levels to be addressed in management, to ensure fish, shellfish and associated and dependent species populations are maintained at ecologically healthy, resilient levels.

- 5.5. Support all commercial fisheries to transition to operate with independently-verified best practice methods and equipment that minimises ecological impacts, including avoiding bycatch of protected species, and carbon release from sediments, and that fishing occurs within agreed take areas.
- 5.6. Design and implement innovative, detailed and effective incentives and penalties to avoid bycatch and halt any further decline of protected and/or threatened marine species from all forms of fishing.
- 5.7. Strengthen the monitoring and enforcement of fishing regulations including recreational fishing, and monitoring of commercial fishing to avoid bycatch of protected species, avoid overexploitation and increase the resilience of fishery species to climate change.
- 5.8. Ensure that recreational fishing bag limits address cumulative and long-term ecological effects and avoid harm to protected species.
- 5.9. Promote recreational fishing reporting and research the potential for recreational fishing licensing and innovative use of the licensing revenue.
- 5.10. Ensure that scientific observers, or other means of assessing catches such as cameras, are on every significant vessel operating in Aotearoa New Zealand waters.
- 5.11. Ensure video footage from onboard cameras is publicly accessible.
- 5.12. Support appropriate financial mechanisms (e.g. resource rentals) so that users of coastal waters (e.g. marine farmers) pay a use or occupation charge for private commercial use of public coastal and marine space and ensure the funds raised support sustainable management.
- 5.13. Set a target of zero fishing-related mortality of marine mammals, turtles, seabirds, and other protected marine species, for all fisheries, strengthen regulation including by setting interim mortality limits for these species and close fisheries as soon as a limit is reached.
- 5.14. Reduce ghost fishing gear by:
  - 5.14.1. mandating gear marking to promote responsible ownership;
  - 5.14.2. providing adequate recovery and disposal facilities for old gear and improving seabed mapping to help avoid broken gear; and
  - 5.14.3. phasing out the use of synthetic plastic ropes which shed microplastics in the marine environment.
- 5.15. Improve the viability of small commercial fishers in the inshore fleet by:
  - 5.15.1. reviewing the operation of the QMS to better enable the viability of small inshore fishers to provide New Zealanders with verifiably sustainable seafood;
  - 5.15.2. investigating opportunities for developing quota in a local pool that can only be owned within a specific geographical area;
  - 5.15.3. revising cost recovery and administration charges so that costs are more in proportion to the commercial benefit derived from the fishery; and

- 5.15.4. supporting responsible fisheries education, training and credentialing.
- 5.16. Promote the use of marine permaculture and polytrophic aquaculture to enable the harvesting of farmed marine species, including kelp, without the introduction of artificial feed.

## **6. Connection with the Marine Environment**

### *Issues*

The oceans are part of our heritage, but access to the marine environment is inequitable, and for many children not readily possible. There are too few protected places (such as fully protected marine reserves) where New Zealanders can experience the marine ecosystem in an undamaged and natural state. Knowledge of the past abundance of our moana is being lost over time.

### *Actions*

- 6.1. Support programmes to build a connection with the marine environment and ocean including:
  - 6.1.1. Developing and delivering cross-cultural ocean literacy so that all peoples of Aotearoa can learn to understand, care for, and love the ocean;
  - 6.1.2. Supporting adult and child learn-to-swim and diving programmes, learn-to-sail programmes, and opportunities to visit no-take marine protected areas;
  - 6.1.3. Enhancing and promoting tertiary education and training, and research and capability-building, opportunities in marine sciences;
  - 6.1.4. Supporting non-extractive marine-based recreation and tourism activities; and
  - 6.1.5. Investing in mātauranga Māori as it pertains to the moana.