

APPENDIX 26

RECREATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS ASSESSMENT



Recreation and Public Access Assessment

Shipyard and drydock facility at Marsden Point, Whangārei
Harbour

Prepared for Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
30 July 2026

Everything parks, recreation, and community

This report has been prepared for the Prepared for Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) by Paul Wilson from Xyst Limited.

Acknowledgement: This report draws on previous recreation assessments undertaken by Rob Greenaway and Associates

Revision History

Rev.	Date	Author	Notes
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1. SUMMARY

This report provides an assessment of the actual and potential effects of the proposed shipyard and drydock facility at Marsden Point on recreation resources, public access, and recreational use within the relevant part of Whangārei Harbour and its margins. The assessment has been prepared to support the Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE) for the substantive application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 for the shipyard and drydock facility project.

In preparing this report, I have considered the nature and scale of the proposal, the characteristics of the receiving environment, the existing pattern of recreation use, the applicable policy context, and the extent to which any identified adverse effects can be avoided, remedied, mitigated, offset or otherwise managed.

The proposal is a substantial marine maintenance and vessel servicing facility to be developed adjacent to the western side of the existing Northport operations area. It includes reclamation, dredging, wharf and haul-out infrastructure, hardstand and operational areas, and associated landside access and servicing. It will occupy part of a modified port and industrial environment at Marsden Point, but it is also located within a wider coastal setting that supports a diverse range of public recreation opportunities, including walking, beach use, swimming, shore-based fishing, boating, waka ama, birdwatching, water access associated with Te Araroa, and other forms of informal coastal recreation.

The receiving environment is therefore one in which industrial and port related activities already occur, but where recreational use remains important at both the local and wider harbour scale. The policy and strategy material reviewed for this assessment generally recognises two matters of direct relevance. The first is the importance of maintaining and enhancing public access to and along the coastal environment, including walking access and public open space. The second is the importance of recognising and providing for diverse coastal recreation opportunities while also acknowledging the long-established strategic and economic importance of industrial and port activity at Marsden Point. In my opinion, the proposal must therefore be assessed in the context of an already heavily modified working harbour, while still giving appropriate weight to the protection of public recreation opportunities and coastal access.

Existing recreation values in the locality are varied. On the southern side of the harbour these include near-continuous public access along much of the foreshore; formal and informal beach access points; boat ramps at One Tree Point, Marsden Cove and Blacksmiths Creek; the Blacksmiths Creek Walkway and western fishing pier provided by Northport; the eastern ferry pontoon and fishing location provided by Northport; Marsden Point Beach; and informal use for walking, running, dog walking, picnicking, swimming and shore-based fishing. On the northern side of the harbour, relevant facilities and settings include Reotahi Bay, the Reotahi Walkway, McLeod Bay Jetty, the water taxi connection used by Te Araroa walkers, local boat ramps, and coastal settings used for fishing, boating, diving and general scenic appreciation. More broadly, the harbour supports recreational boating, fishing, waka

ama and other water-based activity, while the harbour entrance and Whangārei Heads coast provide the more important local diving and higher amenity coastal boating settings.

Some activities are of greater direct relevance to the proposal area than others. In particular, the Blacksmiths Creek Walkway, the western fishing pier, the small beach at the western end of the revetment and boating movements associated with Marsden Cove are the recreation opportunities most likely to be directly affected.

By contrast, many other harbour-wide and district-scale recreation opportunities will remain available and largely unchanged, including the majority of beaches, swimming locations, regional boating destinations, harbour access points, and northern-side recreation settings.

Construction

During construction, the principal recreation effect is the temporary loss of access to the existing western fishing pier and associated revetment walkway while replacement facilities are developed. There may also be temporary effects arising from dredging and construction activity within the coastal marine area, including temporary navigational inconvenience for small craft and temporary disturbance to water-based recreation. I consider the temporary closure of the fishing pier and walkway to represent a moderate (but temporary) adverse effect on those users most closely associated with that location, because the activity can continue at alternative nearby locations and because the facility is proposed to be reinstated at the western edge of the proposed reclamation.

Temporary effects on recreational boating during construction are, in my view, low, given the already industrial character of the area, the relatively low level of existing recreation use within the immediate footprint of the proposed works, and the ability for users to navigate around construction activity.

Operation

The principal operational recreation effects are more defined. First, a small but valued beach area at the western end of the existing revetment and at the end of the Blacksmiths Creek Walkway will be partly lost or materially altered by the project works. This will reduce the scale of that beach setting and materially change its outlook and experiential qualities. For users of the walkway and beach, this is likely to be the most pronounced adverse effect of the proposal. In my opinion, that effect is high at the local scale and, for regular users of that specific place, locally significant.

Secondly, the western fishing pier and its access will be reconfigured and relocated. Although the replacement pier is expected to provide essentially the same core fishing function, the surrounding setting will change. I nevertheless consider the long-term operational effect on that fishing opportunity to be nil overall before mitigation, and potentially positive after mitigation with improved accessibility.

Thirdly, the proposal will alter the navigation pattern of some recreational vessels, particularly those travelling to and from Marsden Cove and the Whangārei Heads. However, the affected area already sits within a working harbour environment with existing navigation controls and commercial vessel

activity. In my view, recreational boating will continue to be able to occur, with only minor route adjustments and some increased caution/control required around vessel movements¹. Those effects are assessed as low. I do not consider the proposal will materially constrain the wider pattern of recreational boating within Whangārei Harbour.

Other recreation activities, including walking, running, dog walking, picnicking, swimming, and non-motorised water use, may experience some local change in setting quality near the project area, but most opportunities will remain available either in place or at nearby substitute locations.

Effects on these activities are generally limited by the already modified character of Marsden Point, the localised footprint of the most direct changes, and the availability of comparable alternative access points and recreation settings nearby.

The proposal may also provide some positive recreation outcomes if the replacement walkway and fishing infrastructure are designed to a higher accessibility standard than currently exists. In particular, there is a meaningful opportunity to improve accessibility for people with reduced mobility by providing a better graded and more inclusive route from Blacksmiths Creek Walkway to the replacement fishing pier. There is also potential for enhancing bird watching activity by the creation of a bird hide at a suitable location along the revetment wall. These outcomes would not remove the adverse effects identified above, particularly the loss of part of the small beach setting, but they could contribute to better overall recreational provision in the locality.

The overall cumulative effects of the consented Berth 4 reclamation, the proposed eastward reclamation and the proposed shipyard and drydock reclamation will be high at the local level and more than minor at the regional level.

Overall I consider the proposal's adverse effects on recreation to be low with respect to recreational boating, walking and fishing and locally significant with respect to the loss of the small beach area before mitigation. After mitigation, including reinstatement of the fishing pier and walkway and consideration of improved accessibility and bird watching opportunities, I assess the proposal adverse effects as positive to low other than for the impacts on the small beach area which will remain significant at the local scale.

¹ Northport's Navigation Safety Report (Goodchild 2026) describes the use of a dedicated escort boat to be used during docking manoeuvres to prevent small craft impeding the movement of larger vessels.

Qualifications and experience

My full name is Paul Kimble Wilson. I am a Director of Xyst Limited which is a parks and recreation consultancy based in Christchurch.

I hold the qualification of Diploma of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management from Lincoln University (1987) and Post Graduate Certificate of Applied Science (Lighting Design) Massey University (2010).

I have 38 years' experience in recreation planning and management of public open space including roles with the Department of Conservation, Auckland City Council, Queenstown Lakes District Council and Xyst Limited.

I am an Accredited Recreation Professional of Recreation Aotearoa (the New Zealand Recreation Association) and Certified International Parks Professional (World Urban Parks). I am a member of the New Zealand Association for Impact Assessment and Illuminating Engineering Society of Australia and New Zealand.

I was appointed to the inaugural Sport NZ Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Recreation Council in 2009 – 2013 and was awarded the President's Award by Recreation Aotearoa in 2012. I served as the Chairman (Asia Pacific) of the International Federation of Parks and Recreation (2009 - 2011).

Code of Conduct

I have been provided with a copy of the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. I have read and agreed to comply with that Code. This evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying upon the specified evidence of another person. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

I am not aware of any knowledge gaps, or any uncertainties in scientific information and analysis that I rely on in my evidence.

To the best of my knowledge, I have no real or perceived conflict of interest.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The development and operation of a marine maintenance operations facility abutting the western side of the existing Northport port facility at Marsden Point, Whangārei Harbour. The project includes a reclamation, vessel haul-out system, and associated wharf structures, dredging, and supporting infrastructure.

Key components of the project include:

- reclamation of approximately 9.7ha
- a 'cutout' to the reclamation where a vessel haul out system is to be located, being a floating drydock or potentially shiplift or other lifting mechanism
- construction of a piled wharf structure to accommodate vessels either temporarily (before/after haul out), or for extended periods where works not requiring haul out can be undertaken
- dredging stage one: capital and maintenance dredging associated with construction and ongoing operation of the marine maintenance operations facility, including a berth pocket and a vessel turning basin to provide for safe navigation
- dredging stage two: capital dredging to ensure sufficient volume of dredge spoil is available to construct both the NDD and Northport's Vision for Growth development
- fixed plant and buildings to accommodate marine maintenance activities and materials
- sufficient working and laydown areas for marine maintenance operations, including the ability to transfer vessels to hardstand
- access to and around the marine maintenance operations facility, including a landside area for staff carparking
- public access around the edge of the reclamation to a public fishing platform

The marine maintenance operations facility is to provide vessel maintenance, repairs, and servicing, including but not limited to cleaning, painting, and repair of commercial and naval vessels, including Cook Strait ferries and Royal New Zealand Navy logistics vessels, along with other vessels such as international freight vessels and super yachts. The facility has design capacity to accommodate vessels ~50m to 230m in length with displacement between 500t and 28,000t. The facility will be based on normal working hours of 7am-6pm but the capacity to operate 24/7/365 where required, subject to appropriate restrictions on noise-generating activities.

The location of the facility has been carefully selected for functional and operational requirements, including the need for deep water access, sheltered harbour conditions, proximity to existing port services, sea and land transport links, and integration with established and proposed marine and land-based industrial infrastructure.

The project is listed in Schedule 2 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 as having significant regional or national benefits.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND STRATEGIES

This section summarises the main policy direction pertaining to the management of recreational values within the study area, as documented in strategies and plans produced by the Department of Conservation (DOC), Whangārei District Council (WDC), and Northland Regional Council (NRC). This recreation-focused summary is intended to supplement, rather than replace, the detailed analysis of the regulatory and planning environment contained in the AEE accompanying this application. Its purpose is to contextualise the discussion and assessment of recreation issues and effects.

3.1 Patuharakeke Management Plan of 2014

The Patuharakeke Hapū Environmental Management Plan (HEMP), updated in December 2014, outlines the iwi's cultural, environmental, and resource management framework. It serves as a guiding document for kaitiakitanga, advocating for the protection of their ancestral lands, waterways, and marine resources.

While there are no specific provisions relating to recreation, HEMP generally supports recreation activity where it aligns with cultural values, protection of cultural landscapes and mahinga kai and kaitiakitanga. *Part III: Resource Issues* sets out the objectives and policies relating to public access including access for recreation.

Section 5.8 *Public Access* identifies “access has long been a significant issue for Patuharakeke for three principle reasons:

- Kaitiaki require access to all waahi tapu and sites of cultural significance. With the alienation of most ancestral lands from Maori title many of these sites are now on either private or public land. Many of our sites have already been damaged or modified beyond recognition and we have serious concerns about the ability of agencies to ensure our sites are not further compromised.
- Access to customary fisheries, mahinga kai and customary resources. Many of these customary areas are now only accessible across public or private land which raises issues for Patuharakeke and landowners.
- The current Crown policy of providing access for all to and along all parts of our waterways and coastline raises significant issues.”

HEMP notes “Patuharakeke wish to be fully involved in the preparation of any public access policies or plans by any agency from the outset of the planning process.”

5.8.1 Issues notes “a) Alienation of ancestral land from Patuharakeke ownership restricts our access to many sites of significance to us, including waahi tapu and cultural harvest areas” and, b) There is a conflict between public access, protection of sites and resources of importance to Patuharakeke.”

5.8.3 Policies notes “a) Policies and plans prepared by statutory agencies must recognise the rights of access that Patuharakeke have:

- i. to all waahi tapu,
- ii. for the harvesting and collection of kai,
- iii. to taonga prized for traditional, customary and cultural uses, and
- iv. for the purposes of kaitiaki/cultural health monitoring.

b) Public access rights should not be given precedence over spiritual and customary values and sites.”

Section 9.3 *Access to the Coastal Environment* notes “Unrestricted access to the coast by the public, vehicles and horses can have adverse effects on kaimoana, taonga species, waahi tapu, public safety and amenity values.” (9.3.1. p74). Objectives (9.3.2) include:

- a) Healthy dune and beach ecology, safety for beach goers, and protection of sites of significance, natural character and amenity through collaborative management between Patuharakeke and the respective agencies.
- b) Customary access is protected and enhanced.

Relevant policies include:

- a) Customary access to the coastal environment is a customary right, not a privilege, and must be recognised and provided for independently from general public access.
- b) Policies and plans prepared by statutory agencies must recognise the rights of access that Patuharakeke have:
 - v. to all waahi tapu:
 - vi. for the harvesting and collection of kai;
 - vii. to taonga prized for traditional, customary and cultural uses; and
 - viii. for the purposes of kaitiaki/cultural health monitoring.
- c) PTB will continue to work collaboratively as a partner with the various agencies to find solutions to issues with public access to the coast in our rohe.
- d) PTB will oppose coastal land use and development that results in the further loss of customary access to the coastal marine area, including any activity that will result in the private ownership of the foreshore.

3.2 Mana Whakahono ā Rohe

Mana Whakahono ā Rohe (2020) is a statutory agreement between Northland Regional Council and hapū of Te Taitokerau. There are no specific provisions relating to recreation.

3.3 Department of Conservation

3.3.1. New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (as Amended 2025)

Objective 4 of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) (2010/2025) aims to “maintain and enhance the public open space qualities and recreation opportunities of the coastal environment by (p9):

- recognising that the coastal marine area is an extensive area of public space for the public to use and enjoy;
- maintaining and enhancing public walking access to and along the coastal marine area without charge, and where there are exceptional reasons that mean this is not practicable providing alternative linking access close to the coastal marine area; and
- recognising the potential for coastal processes, including those likely to be affected by climate change, to restrict access to the coastal environment and the need to ensure that public access is maintained even when the coastal marine area advances inland”

Policy 18 of the NZCPS relates to public open space, as follows:

“Recognise the need for public open space within and adjacent to the coastal marine area, for public use and appreciation including active and passive recreation, and provide for such public open space, including by:

- a) ensuring that the location and treatment of public open space is compatible with the natural character, natural features and landscapes, and amenity values of the coastal environment;
- b) taking account of future need for public open space within and adjacent to the coastal marine area, including in and close to cities, towns and other settlements;
- c) maintaining and enhancing walking access linkages between public open space areas in the coastal environment;
- d) considering the likely impact of coastal processes and climate change so as not to compromise the ability of future generations to have access to public open space; and
- e) recognising the important role that esplanade reserves and strips can have in contributing to meeting public open space needs.”

Policy 19 of the NZCPS relates to walking access, as follows:

1. Recognise the public expectation of and need for walking access to and along the coast that is practical, free of charge and safe for pedestrian use.
2. Maintain and enhance public walking access to, along and adjacent to the coastal marine area, including by:
 - a. identifying how information on where the public have walking access will be made publicly available;
 - b. avoiding, remedying or mitigating any loss of public walking access resulting from subdivision, use, or development; and
 - c. identifying opportunities to enhance or restore public walking access, for example where:
 - i. connections between existing public areas can be provided; or
 - ii. improving access would promote outdoor recreation; or
 - iii. physical access for people with disabilities is desirable; or
 - iv. the long-term availability of public access is threatened by erosion or sea level rise; or
 - v. access to areas or sites of historic or cultural significance is important; or
 - vi. subdivision, use, or development of land adjacent to the coastal marine area has reduced public access, or has the potential to do so.
3. Only impose a restriction on public walking access to, along or adjacent to the coastal marine area where such a restriction is necessary:
 - a. to protect threatened indigenous species; or
 - b. to protect dunes, estuaries and other sensitive natural areas or habitats; or
 - c. to protect sites and activities of cultural value to Māori; or
 - d. to protect historic heritage; or
 - e. to protect public health or safety; or
 - f. to avoid or reduce conflict between public uses of the coastal marine area and its margins; or
 - g. for temporary activities or special events; or
 - h. for defence purposes in accordance with the Defence Act 1990; or
 - i. to ensure a level of security consistent with the purpose of a resource consent; or
 - j. in other exceptional circumstances sufficient to justify the restriction.
4. Before imposing any restriction under (3), consider and where practicable provide for alternative routes that are available to the public free of charge at all times.

3.3.2 Conservation Management Strategy

The Department of Conservation's Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) for Northland 2014-2024 (2014) locates the study area in the 'Whangaruru-Mangawhai Coast Place'. The public

conservation areas within this place and the study area are shown in Figure 1. The Bream Head tracks are identified as a 'gateway destination' (one of eight in the Northland Conservancy)². The CMS describes the recreation setting as (p89):

"Whangārei Harbour has some significant harbour features and estuarine habitats, ranging from upper harbour mud and sand flats to deep channels, islands, extensive shellfish sand banks and deep holes near the harbour entrance. Whangārei Harbour Marine Reserve comprises two sites — Waikaraka and around Motukaroro (Passage) Island at Reotahi... Visitor use is moderate to high in this Place, especially in summer when camping and boating are very popular, along with the active use of the many sandy beaches for fishing, swimming and surfing. Snorkelling and scuba diving are also popular along the coast, particularly at the Poor Knights Islands Marine Reserve. There are four camping grounds administered by the Department, all of which are heavily used over the height of the summer months, especially since many private camps have been converted into coastal subdivisions. Tracks and walkways through many of the reserves supplement those provided by the local authority. The Te Araroa Trail follows close to the coast for its entire length through this Place. The attractions and activities are primarily used by locals, but domestic and international tourism is increasing... Whangarei, the major urban area and administrative centre for the Northland region, is the location for principal sites of industrial processing. It includes the only oil refinery in New Zealand, a large forestry port, cement and fertiliser works, transport systems, and other planned or existing activities adjacent to Whangarei Harbour such as at Marsden Point and lower Port Road. All of these have the potential to cause adverse impacts on natural and historic values if not closely monitored. Three pipelines carrying gas and petroleum products from the Marsden Point Oil Refinery pass through land administered by the Department, and require ongoing inspection and maintenance. The Marsden Point Oil Refinery, deep water export port and new manufacturing plants lie immediately adjacent to recreation areas, kiwi and shorebird habitat, sites important for biodiversity, historical and archaeological sites, and marine reserves. Extensive flat land and improved transport links with Auckland are creating opportunities for economic growth that are increasing pressure on natural values and the types of visitor experience."

² <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/northland/places/whangarei-harbour-marine-reserve/> (Accessed 7 April 2026)

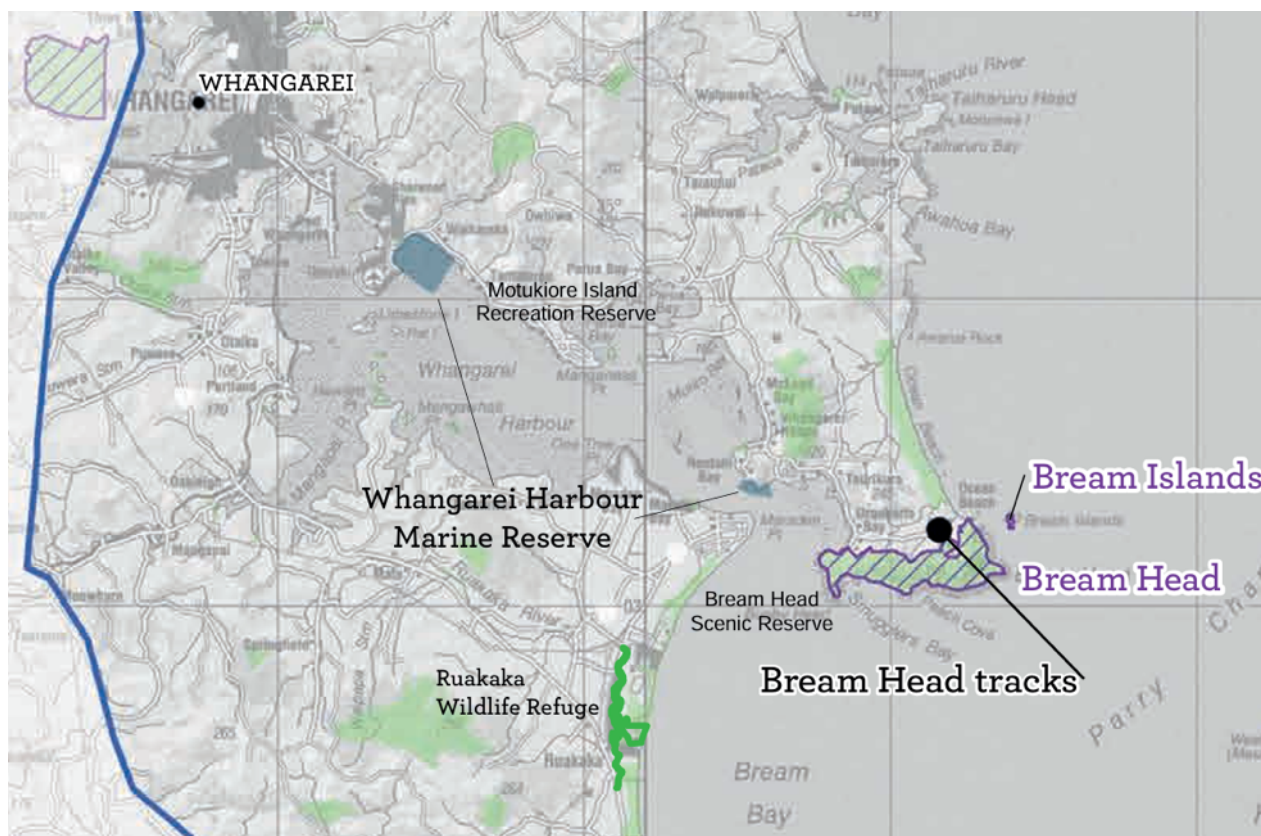


Figure 1 Northland CMS Volume 2 Map 5.9 Whangaruru-Mangawhai Coast Place

Whangārei Harbour is identified as a marine habitat with recreation values (fisheries, high natural character and marine and avian wildlife), as well as adverse effects from overfishing (Figure 2)

Ecosystem	Habitat type	Significant values	Pressures/threats	Protected areas
Whangarei Harbour	Saltmarsh Mānawa/mangroves Karepō/seagrass Intertidal sand and mudflats Estuarine beach Estuarine sand Estuarine reef High-current shallow sand High-current shallow reef	Diverse benthic invertebrate and fish assemblages. Diverse high-current assemblages at Motukaroro. Productive customary, commercial (fin and shell fish) and recreational fisheries. Important coastal and wading bird habitat. Kera wēra/killer whale foraging habitat.	Significant historic and ongoing anthropogenic impacts resulting in environmental degradation, including loss of shellfish beds and extensive karepō/seagrass meadows (and their associated fishery and biodiversity values). Overfishing. Chronic disturbance and underwater noise pollution.	Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve—Motukaroro, Waikaraka.

Figure 2 Excerpt from CMS Appendix 8 p198 - Marine Habitats

The Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve (Figure 3) was established in 2006. DOC describes the values of the marine reserve as follows:

“This reserve covers two sites – Waikaraka, and Motukaroro/Passage Island at Reotahi. Waikaraka is one of New Zealand’s richest mangrove environments and attracts abundant birdlife. Motukaroro covers reef and sandy seabed habitats. It is notable for its diverse sea sponge populations... On the westward point of the island there is a large fragile environment of filter feeders, including anemones and sponges, whose brilliant colours are stunning and provide a spectacular dive.”³

The proposal will not extend into the marine reserve.

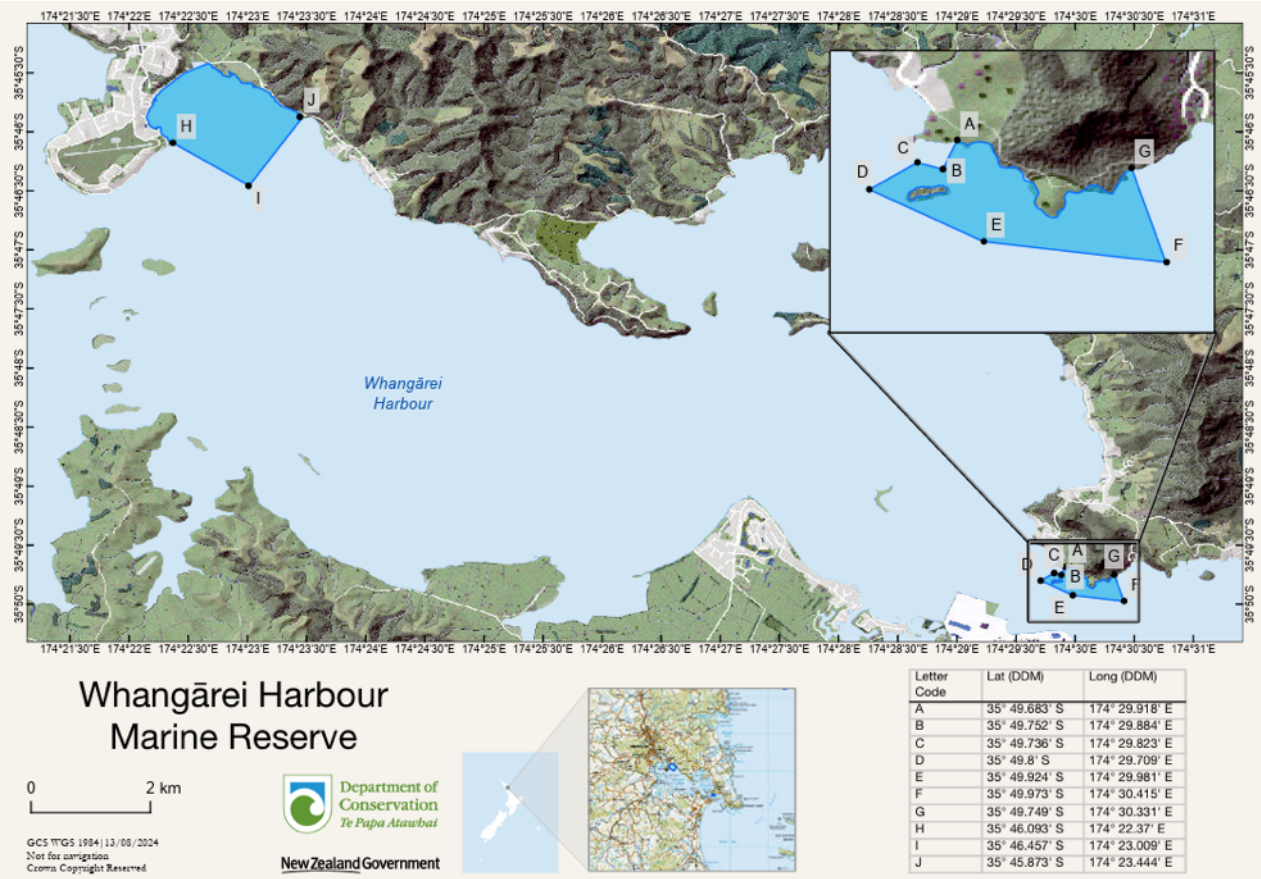


Figure 3 Whangārei Harbour Marine Reserve

3.4 Whangārei District Council

3.4.1 Active Recreation and Sport Strategy

The *Active Sport and Recreation Strategy for Whangārei District (2020)* provides high level direction to the Whangārei District Council (WDC) on how to meet current and future active recreation and sport needs for the District. The Strategy notes “Shorefront locations that are popular with the resident

population for active recreation are facing the greatest pressure. Most provision of amenities at these locations such as parking and toilets falls on Council to provide." (p15). "Fragmented and in some cases limited shore facilities and amenities for water-based active recreation and sport" were identified as being in significant undersupply." (p19). The Strategy recommends that "coastal facilities that support casual **water-based** active participation are reviewed, and upgraded at identified strategic locations, potentially with joint funding from other parties. Strategic locations include: Matapouri, Ruakaka, Riverside Drive, One Tree Point." (p.29).

3.4.2 Whangarei Coastal Management Strategy

The *Whangarei Coastal Management Strategy (2002)* seeks to "establish a strategic, integrated framework for managing the protection, use and development of the coastal environment within the Whangarei District". The Strategy establishes a 'Policy Area' extending from One Tree Point to the Ruakaka River and notes that the industrial area of Marsden Point "has been addressed through the Marsden Point / Ruakaka Structure Plan and it is not intended that the Coastal Management Strategy revisit the future land use planning and management of this area" (p68). The Vision for the One Tree Point to Ruakaka Policy Area includes:

- Recognising and providing for ongoing economic growth in the area and the expansion of the major industrial activity clustered around Marsden Point;
- Maintaining the economic activity and recognising the national importance of Marsden Point and the Port activities in the area;
- Recognising the recreation needs and aspirations of a growing community and enhancing facilities as appropriate;
- Recognising the importance of the expansive coast and promoting public access along this coast;
- Recognising and providing for diverse recreation activities including fishing, boating, surfing, swimming and passive recreation (e.g. walking)

3.4.3 Marsden Point-Ruakaka Structure Plan: 2008

The stated purpose of the Marsden Point and Ruakākā Structure Plan is "to provide an integrated physical development framework plan so as to minimise ad hoc decision making and thereby avoid, remedy or mitigate the cumulative adverse environmental effects of growth and development." (p2). The Plan notes (p22):

- "Passive recreation is well catered for in the area, with the provision of numerous esplanades and adjacent reserves, walkways connecting these reserves, together with the general access afforded to the coast. Many of these reserves are, however, undeveloped.
- A key issue is the general open spaces serving as buffer zones around large and heavy industrial developments, and utility sites also require attention."

3.4.4 Whangārei District Plan

The District Plan notes, “The coast and numerous rivers within the District have high recreational values and high usage, particularly near residential settlements. There is a need to provide public access to, and along, the coast, and to those rivers which have significant recreational values, in order to provide for people’s recreational needs and expectations. In some circumstances it may be necessary to restrict or exclude public access, to protect human health and safety, or ecological values.” (Part 2: District Wide Matters – Riparian and Coastal Margins).

Objectives RCM-01-RCM05 address the provision of safe public access to the coast, rivers and streams; the protection of conservation and cultural values; the provision of areas for water-related recreation activities; and the provision of areas for hazard mitigation alongside the coast, rivers and streams via the creation of esplanade reserves.

The Government Purpose Reserve (Marsden Point Wildlife Management Reserve) is zoned as Natural open space zone which is “primarily managed for the conservation and protection of natural resources” and notes “these open spaces play a special role in educating residents and visitors and providing recreational opportunities”.

3.4.5 Open Space Strategy

The Whangārei District *Open Space Strategy (2001)* described the recreation values of the Whangārei Harbour and its shoreline as a “a popular destination for aquatic activities, including swimming and fishing, sailing and boating, water skiing and kayaking” (p34). Identified ‘threats and issues’ for recreation and other values included (p34):

- Abandoned islands, such as Matakohē/Limestone Island, have been left in a degraded state.
- Derelict structures litter the foreshore. Of particular concern are the jetties that are unsafe for the public to use.
- Boat access facilities to the harbour need upgrading and assessing.
- Runoff, erosion and siltation threaten the water quality of the harbour.
- The community is promoting a vision for marine reserves in the Whangārei Harbour.
- There are illegal structures, including boat sheds and baches, on coastal reserve land.

Strengths and opportunities for the Harbour and shoreline included (p35):

- Support community efforts to assist in protecting cultural sites and in restoring wildlife habitat, public access and understanding on Matakohē/Limestone Island.
- Acquire other islands in the harbour as the opportunity arises subject to funding.
- Assess coastal structures in the harbour and implement a removal or maintenance programme, as appropriate.
- Assess the boat access facilities to ensure they meet the needs of the community.

- Continue to plant the riparian margins to assist with stormwater filtration, bank stability and siltation. Where possible control the land-based activities that contribute to a reduction in water quality.
- Support the establishment of marine reserves in the Whangārei Harbour.

Development priorities for recreation in coastal and marine settings identified in the Open Space Strategy focused primarily on improving coastal access, including in Bream Bay and throughout Whangārei Harbour.

3.4.6 The Whangarei District Walking and Cycling Strategy 2018

The *Whangarei District Walking and Cycling Strategy 2018* identifies the Northport area as a scenic destination (without further description) and illustrates the location of the Te Araroa Trail, with a harbour crossing from Reotahi Bay to the ferry pontoon at Northport (Figure 10). An opportunity to re-route the Te Araroa Trail around the Whangarei Harbour (including linking Whangarei Heads with Ruakaka via Whangarei City Centre) is included however no further discussion is provided.

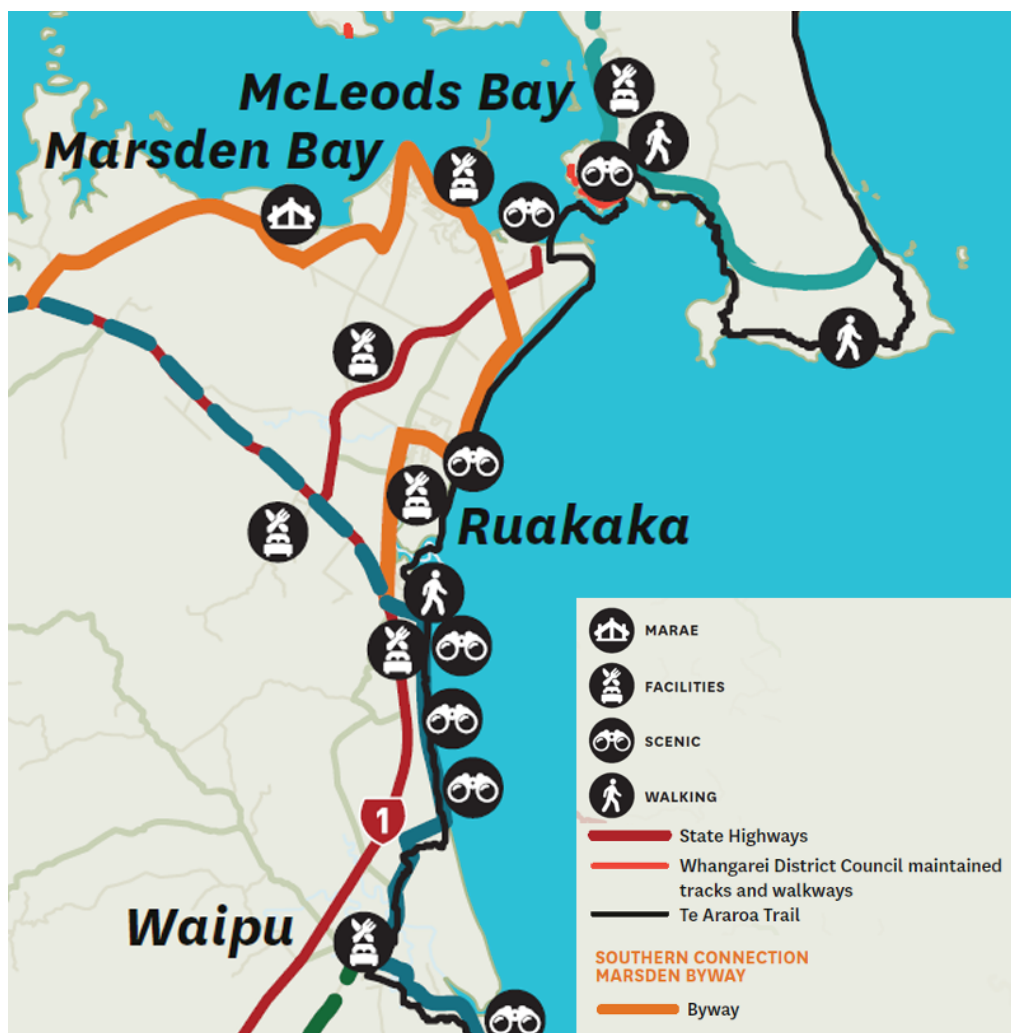


Figure 4 Whangarei Tourism and Recreational Network (WDC Walking and Cycling Strategy)

The *Whangarei District Council City Wide Programme Business Case for Walking and Cycling Networks (2024)* describes the Southern Connection Marsden Byway which is proposed to link the main southern connection with One Tree Point. "This is expected to provide a connection between the fast growing One Tree Point community and Ruakaka. If a future ferry service were to be developed between Marsden Point and McLeods Bay, then an alternative route to Whangarei would be possible." (p149). The completion of the rural tourism and recreational network is identified as "a long-term project, with both the Northern and Southern Connections being the highest priority." (p149).

3.5 Northland Regional Council

3.5.1 Regional Policy Statement

The Operative Regional Policy Statement for Northland (RPS) (NRC, May 2016, Amended June 2018) states (p91):

"Northland's unique coastal environment has a range of landscape, seascape and recreational qualities that make it a popular place for development. Most of our existing settlements are located in the coastal environment and this is also where most development in Northland is occurring. The coastal environment is of huge economic importance to the region (for example, tourism and aquaculture) and our coast is an attribute that sets us apart from other regions. Northland has one of the longest coastlines of any region in the country."

The RPS does not quantify or describe regional coastal recreation values in any detail. Objective 3.2 (d) and (c) of the RPS are to: "Improve the overall quality of Northland's fresh and coastal water with a particular focus on: ... (c) Reducing sedimentation rates in the region's estuaries and harbours; (d) Improving microbiological water quality at popular contact recreation sites, recreational and cultural shellfish gathering sites, and commercial shellfish growing areas to minimise risk to human health".

Policy 4.4.1 (2) (b) refers to "maintaining and protecting significant ecological areas and habitats" that of are importance to recreation: "(2) In the coastal environment, avoid significant adverse effects and avoid, remedy, or mitigate other adverse effects of subdivision, use and development on:... (b) Habitats of indigenous species that are important for recreational, commercial, traditional or cultural purposes; Part 9 of the RPS states the 'environmental results anticipated' and, with reference to Objective 3.2 (as above), expects: 4.2. Regional-wide water quality management... 5. Compliance rates for contact recreation at popular swimming sites are maintained or improved with respect to the relevant guidelines".

3.5.2 Regional Coastal Plan

The Regional Coastal Plan 2004 (RCP) describes regional coastal recreation values (p113): "Northland's warm climate, multitude of harbours and sandy beaches, often dramatic coastal scenery and high coastal water quality make its coast attractive for outdoor recreational pursuits. The diversity of recreational opportunities provided within Northland's coastal marine area is a major reason for its popularity both with Northlanders and visitors to the region and as a result, additional demands are placed on the coastal environment. The region's coastline is extensively used for swimming, boating

and fishing. It also contains numerous areas which are suitable for a wide range of other activities such as scuba diving, snorkelling, water skiing, surfing, windsurfing, sailing, jet-skiing, canoeing, sunbathing, horse riding, picnicking and tramping. In terms of the Resource Management Act, the coast has very high amenity value. Recreational activity occurs mainly in Marine 1 and Marine 2 Management Areas and, to a lesser extent, in Marine 4 (Mooring) Management Areas.

Management of recreation around Northland's coast is generally only necessary where there are large numbers of recreational users and/or there are competing demands for the use of coastal space. In Northland, such situations generally occur over the summer period when large numbers of people "head for the coast" for their holidays. The recreation section (16) of the RCP focuses on avoiding adverse effects caused by recreation and adopts a 'permissive approach' (Policy 16.4) to recreational activities in the Marine 1 and 2 Management Areas, and applies rules to limit adverse effects on environmental and amenity values and public health and safety. The RCP identifies the area within which the marine maintenance and vessel servicing facility would be contained within the Marine 5 (Port Facilities) Management Area. For the Marine 5 Zone the RCP states as Policy 29.4 (3): To ensure that port expansions and new port facilities are located, designed, constructed, and managed in ways which as far as practicable avoid adverse effects on the coastal marine area and where avoidance is not practicable, to mitigate adverse effects and provide for remedying those effects to the extent practicable. Explanation. The possibility of new port development has been raised in a number of areas. Because of the relatively high natural character of much of Northland's coastal marine area and the extensive modification of the coastal marine area often associated with such development, consideration of the effects of new ports is necessary.

3.5.3 Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Strategy

This strategy sets a shared vision, values, outcomes, and actions to improve accessibility and the experiences of people with access needs. It aims to improve the inclusiveness and accessibility of services, activities and facilities in Northland including recreation settings. A focus area for the strategy is improvement of public spaces and activities (parks, playgrounds, beaches, events recreation). Relevant actions include:

- Universal design principles are used to design parks, playgrounds, and reserves
- Review options to make popular beaches accessible
- Provide more accessible walking tracks where possible.

4. EXISTING RECREATION ACTIVITY

This section identifies the existing recreational activities that may be potentially affected by the proposal.

4.1 National and regional recreation participation

Sport NZ (2025) reports on expected participation rates for the Whangarei District and compares these expected participation rates with national benchmarks Figure 5. Notably, swimming (16.7%) and fishing (7.9%) are popular activities with higher participation rates occurring in Whangarei District than the national benchmarks. Participation in walking (39.8%) is notably lower than the national benchmark (45.1%)

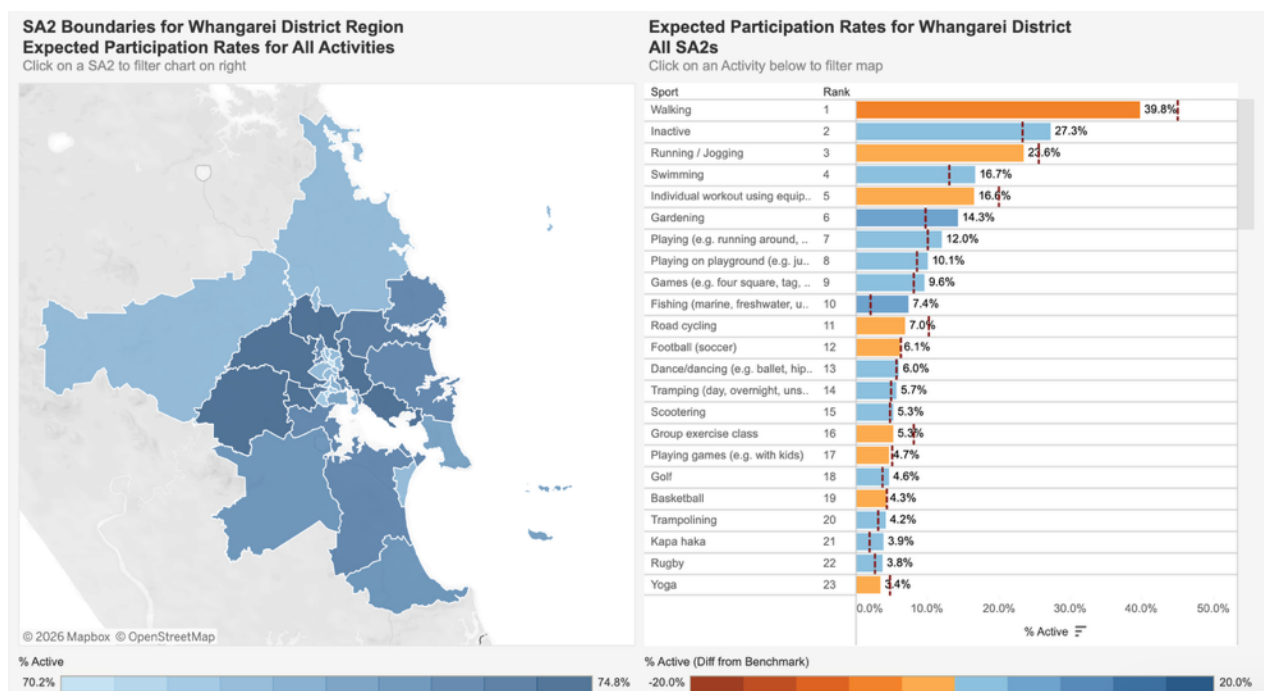


Figure 5 Sport NZ modelled participation data for Whangarei district from 2022 and 2023 Active NZ survey

Maritime New Zealand conducts annual boating participation surveys (MNZ 2024). At the national level, the 2023/24 season shows 40% of the adult population is involved in recreational boating which is down from 49% in 2022/23. The most popular types of boats were kayaks (32%), powerboats up to 6m (12%), jet skis (9%), powerboats more than 6m (2%), dinghies with an outboard (4%), stand-up paddle boards (17%) and yachts and sailing dinghies (1.5%).

4.2 Terrestrial recreation and access

4.2.1 Public access

The Outdoor Access Commission publishes outdoor access maps that indicate where the public has a right of access across land in the vicinity of the project area (Figure 6)⁴.

Near contiguous public access to the foreshore is possible from Pyle Road West to One Tree Point and to the Marsden Cove Marina entrance via esplanade reserve, public road and a marginal strip. From the Marsden Cove Marina entrance west, contiguous public access to the foreshore is available via a marginal strip and recreation reserve (Marsden Bay Reserve) to Blacksmiths Creek with an access point provided along and at the end of Albany Road.

Public access to the south and western side of Blacksmith Creek Sandspit and the Government Purpose (Wildlife Management) reserve is available via Papich Road (formed) and unformed legal road where the WDC administered Blacksmiths Creek Walkway has been formed.

Public access is provided via Ralph Trimmer Drive (formed legal road) to the Marsden Point Beach where public toilets and a car park are located on land vested in WDC. From this point, an esplanade reserve extends parallel to the foreshore providing public access to the end of Mair Road where the esplanade reserve adjoins with the DOC administered Poupouwhenua Scenic Reserve providing contiguous public access to the foreshore as far as the Ruakaka River and then via the Ruakaka Scenic Reserve, Uretiti Recreation Reserve and Uretiti Scenic Reserve and unformed legal road to the Waipu River Mouth.

⁴ This dataset is derived from Land Information NZ (LINZ) data and incorporates third-party information from local councils and the Department of Conservation (DOC).



Figure 6 Public Access in vicinity of Marsden Point (not to scale)

Key formed access points and public facilities in the vicinity of the project area (Figure 7 and Figure 8) are:

1. One Tree Point Boat Ramp

This is a public, dual-lane boat ramp adjacent to the Marsden Point Yacht & Boat Club providing boat access to the Whangarei Harbour. A large car park is provided for car and trailer parking. Public toilets are available and freedom camping is permitted (with restrictions).

2. One Tree Point Road Stairs

A staircase opposite 227 One Tree Point Road provides pedestrian access to the beach and foreshore adjacent to One Tree Point Road.

3. Graham Street Beach Access

A concrete path located between 7 and 9 Graham Street provides pedestrian access to a recreation reserve, esplanade reserve and beach area adjacent to Graham Street.

4. One Tree Point Road Beach Access

A concrete path located between 146 and 148 One Tree Point Road provides pedestrian access to a local purpose (esplanade) reserve and foreshore adjacent to One Tree Point Road.

5. One Tree Point Boat Ramp (opposite school)

A concrete boat ramp is accessed from between 108 and 110 One Tree Point Road. Limited informal parking is available on the esplanade reserve.

6. Marama Place Beach Access

A concrete path located between 9 and 10 Marama Place provides pedestrian access to the esplanade reserve and foreshore at the end of Marama Place.

7. Aarts Place Beach Access

A concrete path located between 19 and 20 Aarts Place provides pedestrian access to the esplanade reserve and foreshore at the end of Aarts Place.

8. Paradise Point Place Beach Access

A concrete path located between 13 and 15 Paradise Point Place provides pedestrian access to the esplanade reserve and foreshore at the end of Paradise Point Place.

9. One Tree Point Road/ Marsden Cove Boat Entrance

Pedestrian access is available from the end of One Tree Point Road via a recreation reserve adjoining the entrance to Marsden Cove. This provides pedestrian access to the beach at the western end of Marsden Bay.

10. Marsden Cove Boat Ramp

A very well utilised, three lane boat ramp is located adjacent to the Marsden Cove commercial area. Boats can be launched and recovered from both sides of the floating pontoon. Car parking is provided in the adjacent sealed car park and nearby all-weather grass area.

11. Marsden Cove Reserve

The reserve offers beach access, public toilets, playground, picnic facilities and a small boat ramp. Freedom camping is permitted (with restrictions).

12. Albany Road Beach Access

A concrete path located between 16 and 18 Albany Road provides pedestrian access to the local purpose (esplanade reserve) and the beach at the eastern end of Marsden Bay.

13. Blacksmiths Creek Boat Ramp

A single lane boat ramp is located at Blacksmiths Creek access by driving along the foreshore from the Marsden Bay Reserve.

14. Blacksmith Creek Walkway

A formed gravel trail begins at the end of Papich Road where eight parking spaces are provided. The walkway provides an easy short walk on a well-formed path through open grassed areas and native vegetation to reach a small beach adjacent to the existing North Port boundary fence. The distance from the car park at Papich Road is approximately 740m.

15. Western Fishing Pier

A gravel path is formed along the existing revetment wall from the end of the Blacksmith Creek Walkway to reach a public fishing pier constructed by Northport. The total distance to the fishing pier from the car park at Papich Road is approximately 1,160m.

16. Eastern Ferry Pontoon Marsden Point

A water taxi pontoon and viewing platform is located at the eastern edge of the existing port reclamation, accessed from Ralph Trimmer Drive. The pontoon is available for public boating access and is also regularly used for recreational fishing activities.

17. Marsden Point Beach

The Marsden Point Beach is accessed from Ralph Trimmer Drive where a car park and public toilets are located. The beach is readily accessible from the car park and adjacent grassed area that is separated from the beach by a low dune.

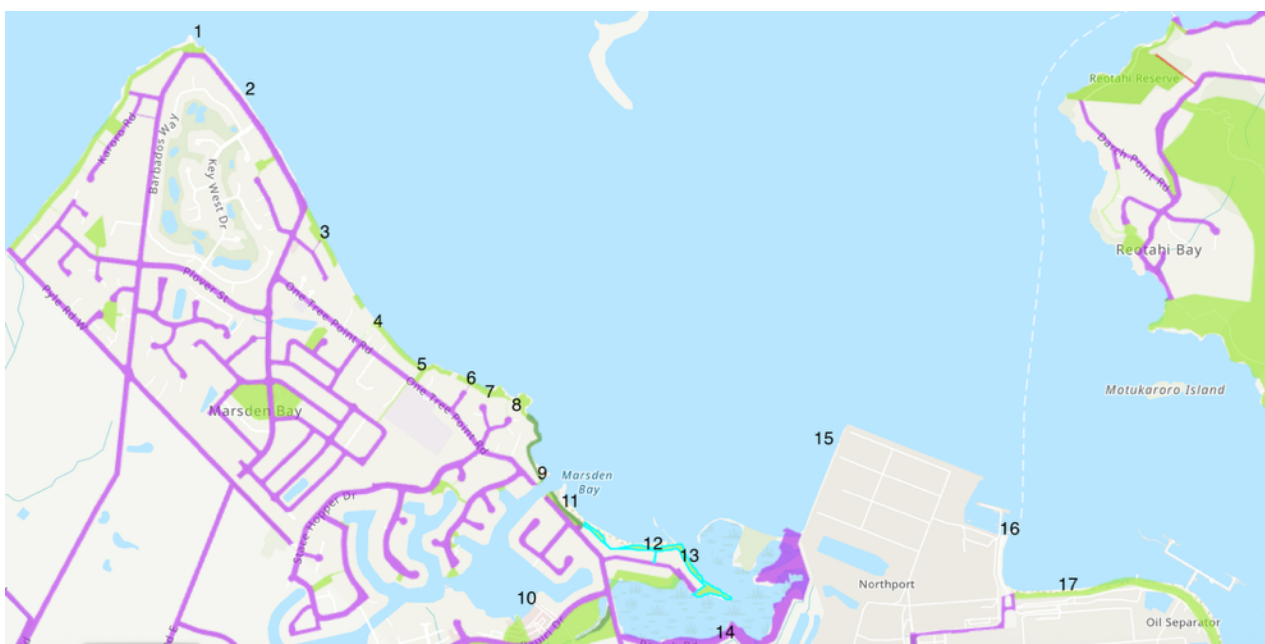


Figure 7 Recreational access and facilities in vicinity of Northport – southern side Whangarei Harbour

18. Mt Aubrey

Mount Aubrey is a steep, bush clad reserve rising above the settlement of McLeod Bay. There is a dedicated carpark at Tiller Park, 600 metres on the left, off Reotahi Road, from where the

northern end of the Mt Aubrey Walkway starts. The Mt Aubrey Walkway traverses Mt Aubrey to Little Munro Bay where parking is available at Bay View Road.

19. Reotahi Walkway

The Reotahi Walkway follows the coastline from Little Munro Bay where it skirts the Reotahi Marine Reserve and the remains of a historic meat processing plant with views over to the Marsden Point port and refinery. The walkway passes the Norfolk Avenue Playground and the Reotahi Scenic Reserve (DOC) before exiting at Stuart Road in McLeod Bay. Freedom camping is permitted (with restrictions) at the Reotahi Walkway car park near Beach Road. The Reotahi Walkway is part of the Te Arora Trail with water taxi operators transporting walkers from Reotahi to the Eastern Ferry Pontoon at Marsden Point.

20. Reotahi Bay Boat Ramp

A single lane, shallow water boat ramp is located off Beach Road. There is limited parking available.

21. Norfolk Avenue Playground

A playground is accessed from Reotahi Road and Norfolk Road. There are good views of the harbour and port from this location.

22. McLeod Bay Jetty

A floating jetty is located at McLeod Bay accessed from Stuart Road. This is popular for fishing.

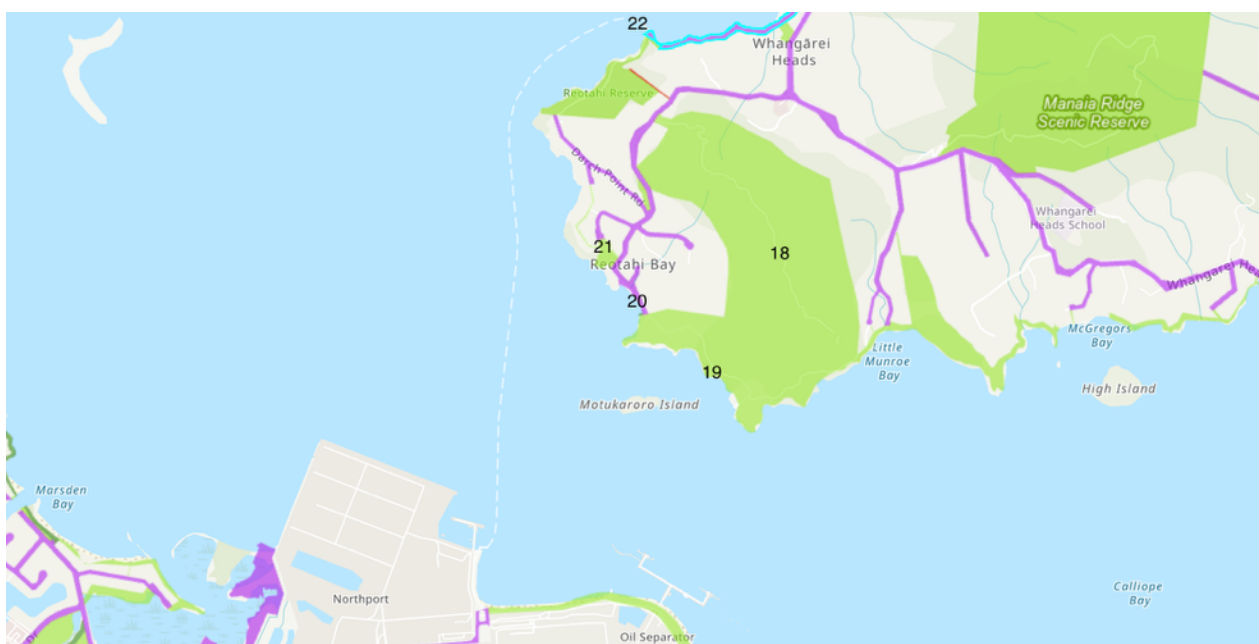


Figure 8 Recreational access and facilities – northern side Whangarei Harbour

4.2.2 Walking and Running (including dog walking)

Walking and running occurs on the local roading network within Marsden Point and on the Blacksmiths Creek walkway and path to the western fishing pier. This is a popular walking and running route for residents of Marsden Cove.

The Blacksmiths Creek walkway is a dedicated year round off-leash dog area open grass area from the start of the walkway eastward to second bridge) (Figure 9).



Figure 9 Whangarei District Council Dog Policy 2024

Strava⁵ is a widely used activity-tracking application in which users voluntarily record recreational activities such as walking, running, and cycling using GPS-enabled devices. Aggregated and

⁵ <https://www.strava.com/maps/global-heatmap>. Strava users are not representative of the general population. Studies show over-representation of males, middle-aged users, higher-income groups, more experienced or fitness-oriented participants (Zander et al 2023). Strava disproportionately captures fitness and recreational activities, and may underrepresent incidental or casual use (Roy et al 2019)

anonymised data sources such as Strava can be used to estimate spatial and temporal patterns of relative human activity. Strava is well suited to estimating relative patterns of use by recreational users, such as the comparison of use between locations, where little or no other data exists (such as observed counts or automated pedestrian counters).

Figure 10 shows the Strava heatmap for the Marsden Point area for recreational use (all foot sports – e.g. walking, running, hiking). Recreational use of the Blacksmiths Creek Walkway for walking and running appears to be the most used walking track in the vicinity of Marsden Point and more popular than general beach walking.

Lower levels of pedestrian use occur on all of the foreshore from One Tree Point to Blacksmiths Creek with slightly more intensive use occurring in the vicinity of Paradise Point Place.

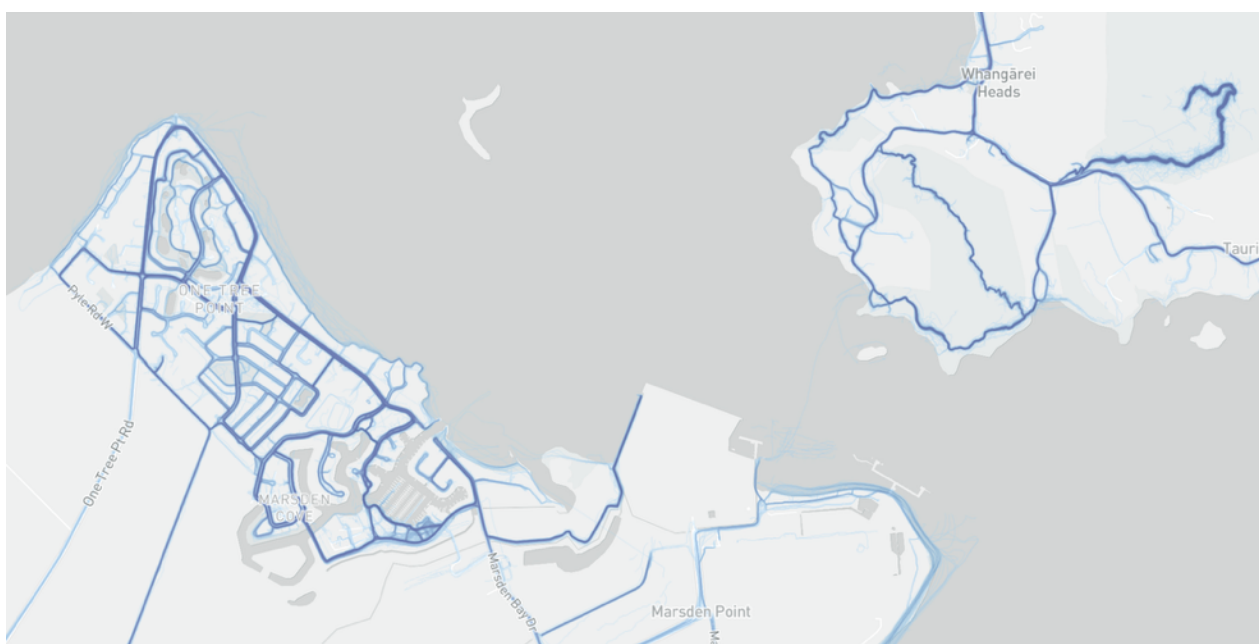


Figure 10 Recreational Use (all foot sports) Strava (March 2025 – March 2026)

Te Araroa Trail

The Te Araroa trail (Cape Reinga to Bluff) travels around the Whangarei Heads to Reotahi where walkers can either book a water taxi from the Reotahi Boat Ramp to the eastern end of Marsden Beach (via two commercial operators) or travel by road from Reotahi via Whangarei to Marsden Point before continuing their journey.

There were an estimated 2,000 registered walkers of the Te Araroa trail in 2024/2025 with approximately 47% walking the entire trail and 5% only walking the North Island providing an

estimate of approximately 1,040 walkers over 2024/25 season passing through or nearby Marsden Point.⁶

4.2.3 Cycling

Cycling occurs on the local roading network within Marsden Point and to a lesser degree on the Blacksmith Creek Walkway. Figure 11 shows the Strava heatmap for the Marsden Point area for recreational use (all cycle sports – e.g. road cycling, mountain biking). Some recreational cycling activity occurs on the Blacksmiths Creek walkway.

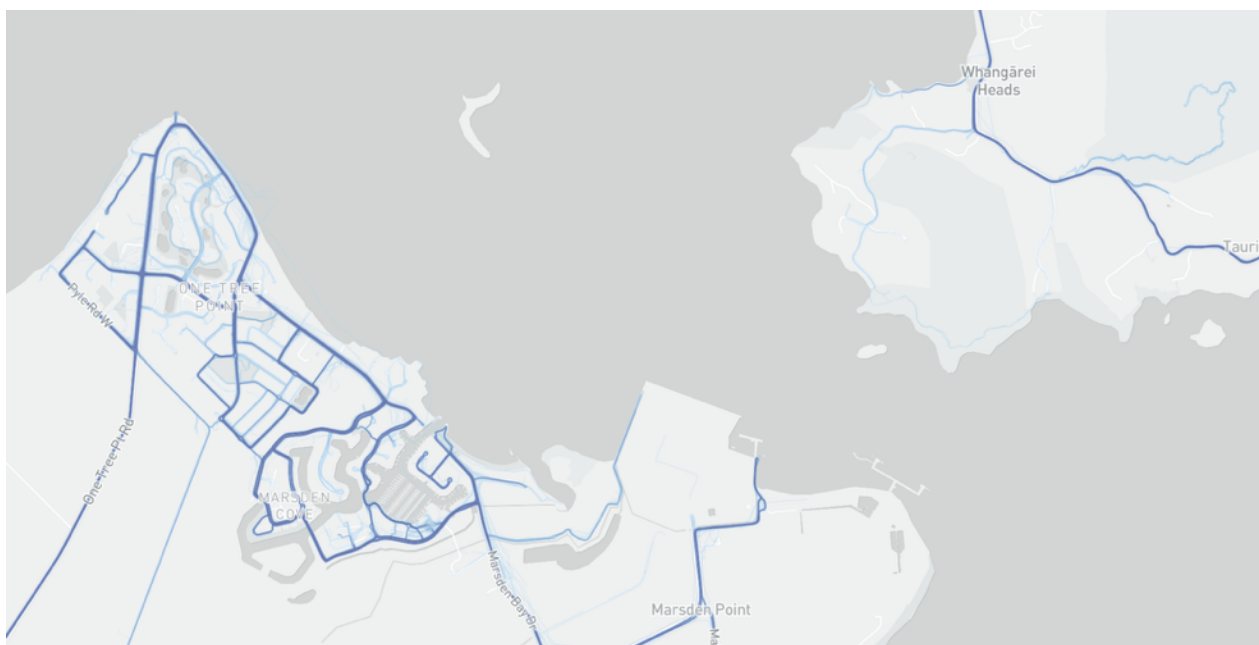


Figure 11 Recreational Use (all cycle sports) Strava (March 2025 – March 2026)

4.2.4 Picnicking and beach activity (including swimming)

The most popular locations for picnicking and beach activity are Marsden Cove Reserve, Marsden Point Beach and One Tree Point.

The NRC monitors water quality at the most popular swimming locations including at One Tree Point which it described as “a popular swimming, shellfish harvesting and fishing spot in Marsden Bay located at the southern head of Whangārei Harbour”. Results of water quality samples taken at this location consistently meet national guidelines⁷.

⁶ Te Araroa Walker Survey 2025. <https://www.teararoa.org.nz/ta-walker-survey/> accessed 7 May 2026

⁷ <https://safeswim.org.nz/locations/one-tree-point> (accessed 25 May 2026)

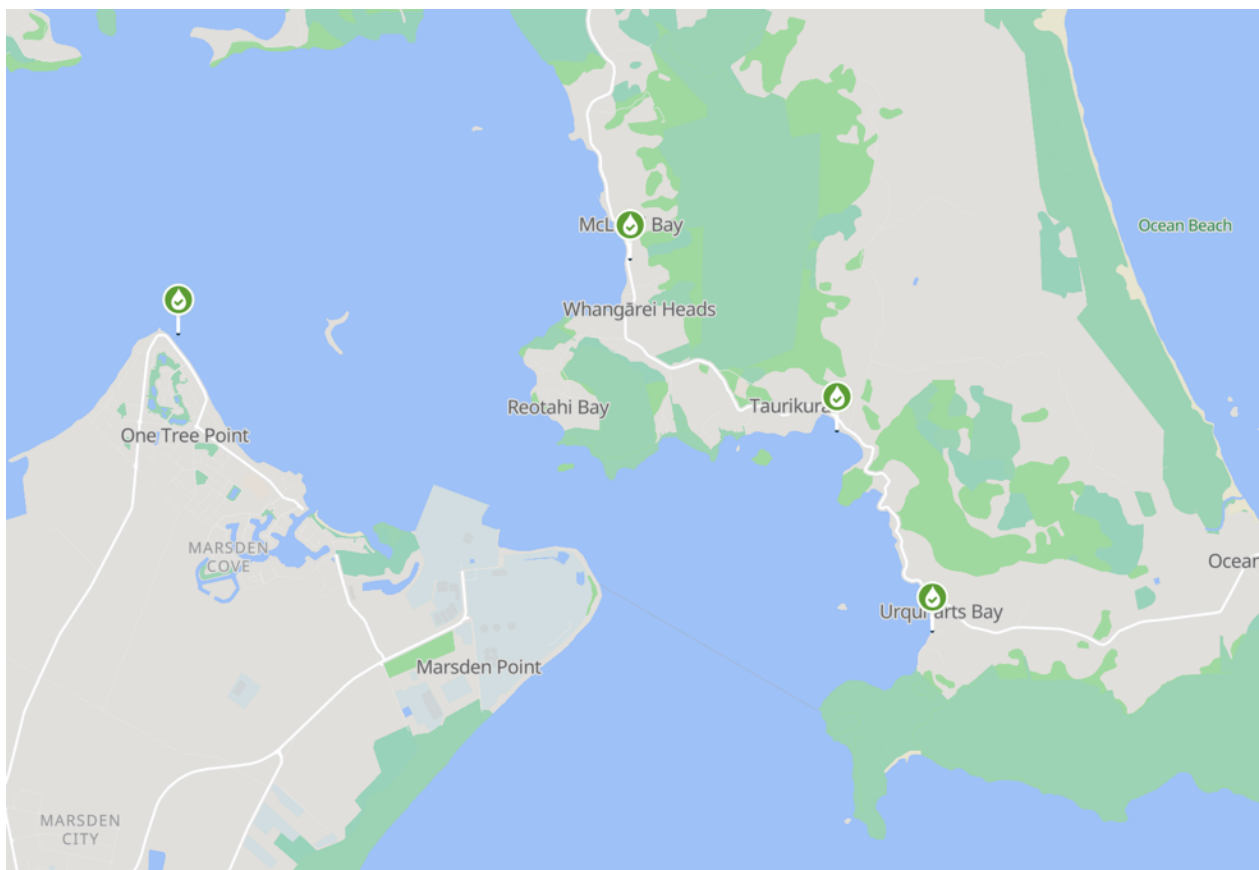


Figure 12 Popular swimming locations where water quality is monitored (Safeswim.org.nz)

4.2.5 Fishing (Shore Based)

The Marsden Point area is popular for shore-based fishing with wharves and jetties being popular spots for recreational fishing. The fishing pier on the western side of Northport is well used as is the jetty on the eastern side of Northport which is accessed from the Blackwater walkway.

Marsden Beach is the most popular location for fishing between Marsden Point and One Tree Point. Fishing is primarily spinning for kahawai and kingfish. Greenaway (2022) undertook a survey of recreational use of the Marsden Bay beach area between December 2020 and June 2021 (intercept survey) and early November 2021 to late January 2022 (observation survey), with 723 individual observations of 2043 visitors. The pontoon at the western end of Marsden Beach and eastern end of Marsden Beach were identified as the most popular places for fishing.

Fishing activity (set netting) was also observed in Blackwater Creek by the author in March 2026.

4.2.6 Shellfish gathering

Shellfish gathering activity within and around Whangārei Harbour is currently constrained by a combination of formal fishery closures, depleted stock status, and environmental and public health considerations. The principal shellfish beds at Mair Bank and Marsden Bank in the lower harbour remain closed to all harvest until 28 June 2028, reflecting consistently low pipi and mussel abundance and ongoing mortality events that have prevented recovery to harvestable levels.

Limited recreational gathering of intertidal species such as cockles and pipi may still occur in selected open areas of the wider harbour margin and adjacent estuaries but there is no information to suggest that recreational gathering of cockles and pipi occurs within the project site or adjacent Government Purpose reserve. As noted by Kelly & Sim-Smith (2026) while cockles are abundant on the mid shore across the entire length of Marsden Bay, “almost all the cockles found were below ‘harvestable’ size.” and “All pipis found were less than 35 mm in length”.

4.2.7 Bird Watching

Birdwatching occurs at several locations throughout the Whangarei District (Figure 13). Birdwatching activity⁸ in the vicinity of the project area is recorded at the “Marsden Point (north) fishing wharf” (Eastern Ferry Pontoon Marsden Point) (28 checklists by 28 birders), Marsden Bay Reserve (121 checklists by 111 birders), Marsden Point – Papich Road (65 checklists by 44 birders) and Motukaroro Island (120 checklists by 105 birders)⁹.

⁸ Birdwatching activity is recorded as a ‘checklist of birds’ uploaded to the eBird website with each checklist being one users observation on a given day.

⁹ <https://ebird.org/region/NZ-NTL-002/hotspots>

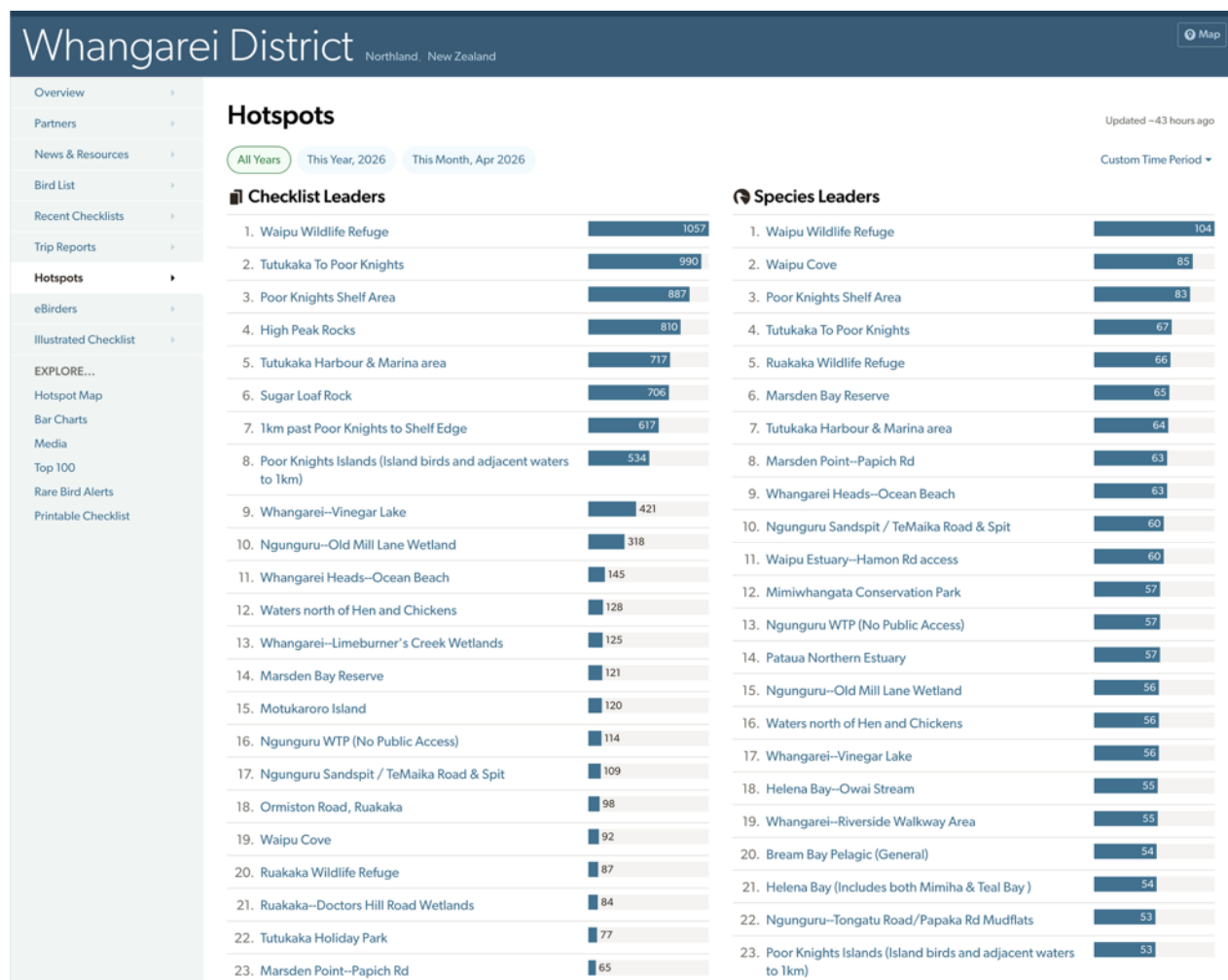


Figure 13 Popularity of birdwatching sites in Whangarei as recorded in eBird (all years)

Marsden Bay Reserve is the 14th most popular birding site recorded in the Whangarei District, followed by Motukaroro Island (15th), Marsden Point -Papich Road (23rd) and Marsden Point (north) fishing wharf (37th).

4.3 Water based recreation and access

4.3.1 Fishing

The Ministry for Primary Industries National Aquatic Biodiversity Information System (NABIS) includes results of aerial surveys of intensity of recreational fishing effort in north-western New Zealand in 2004/2005. All boats counted specifically relate to fishing activity.

Figure 14 shows the density of recreational vessels fishing per km² in the vicinity of Whangarei and Figure 15 shows the density of recreational fishing vessels in the wider Hauraki Gulf.

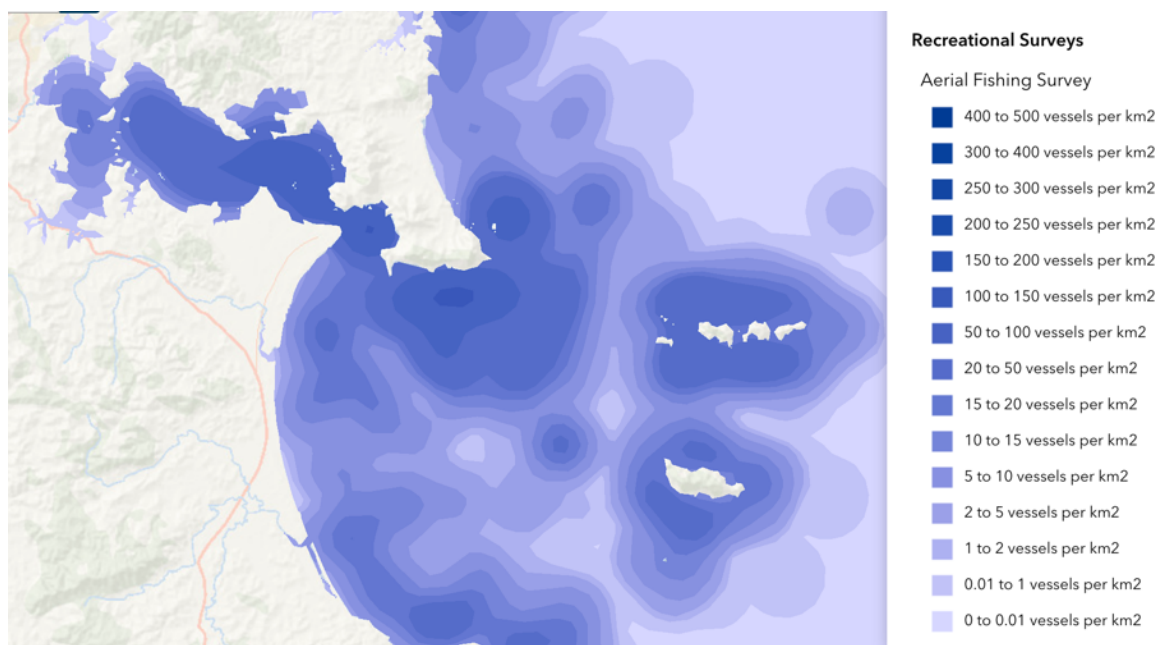


Figure 14 National Aquatic Biodiversity System: Recreational Survey: Aerial Fishing Survey

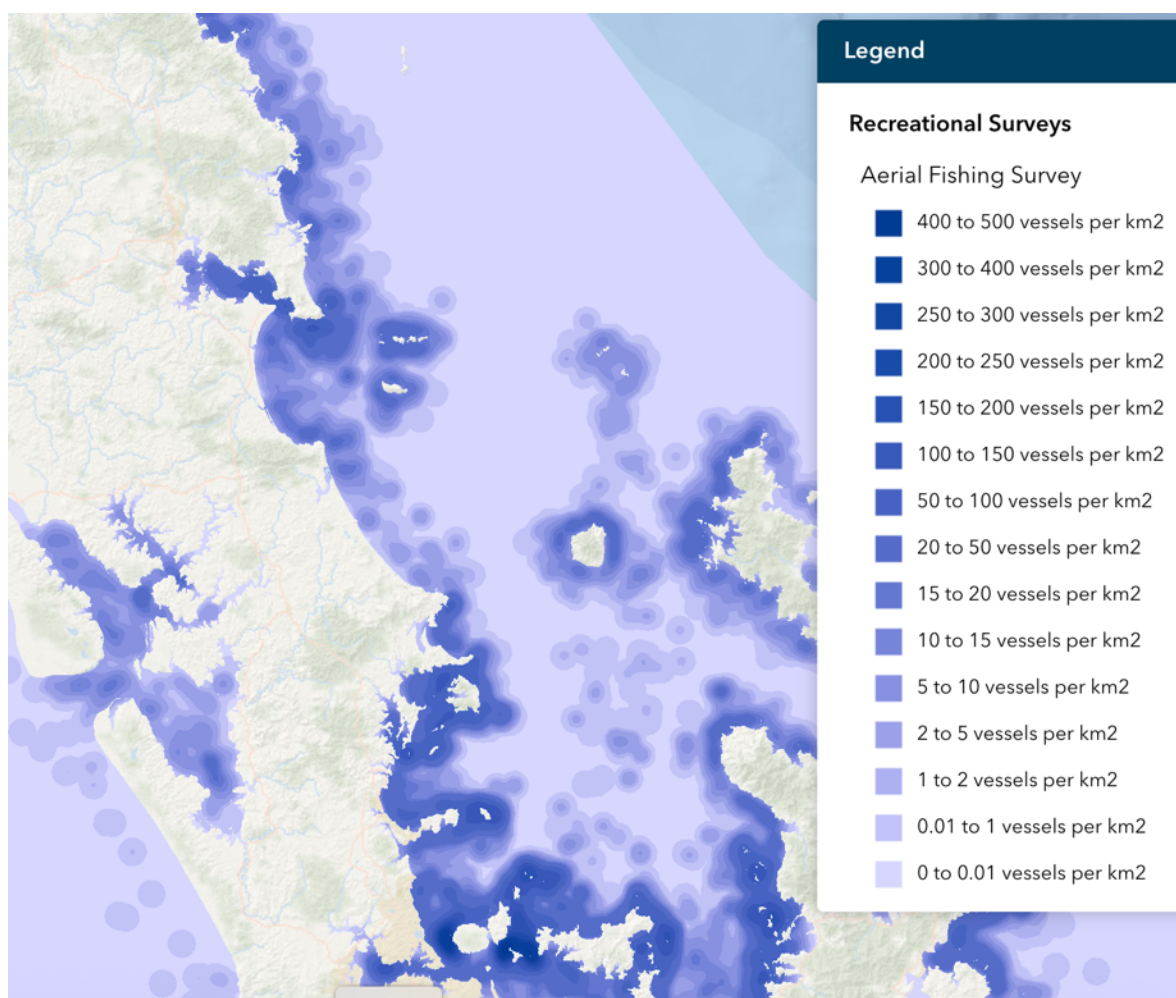


Figure 15 National Aquatic Biodiversity System: Recreational Survey: Aerial Fishing Survey Hauraki Gulf

While the data is old, it shows the relative popularity of boat-based fishing with a peak of 100 to 150 vessels per km² immediately south of Peach Cove and a heavy concentration of activity in the main part of Whangarei Harbour and around Bream Head.

Fisheries New Zealand has undertaken more recent counts of recreational fishing vessels returning to the Parua Bay Boat Ramp on the northern side of the Whangarei Harbour by analysing web camera images. This indicates approximately 6000 annual trips took place in 2023/24 (Figure 16)

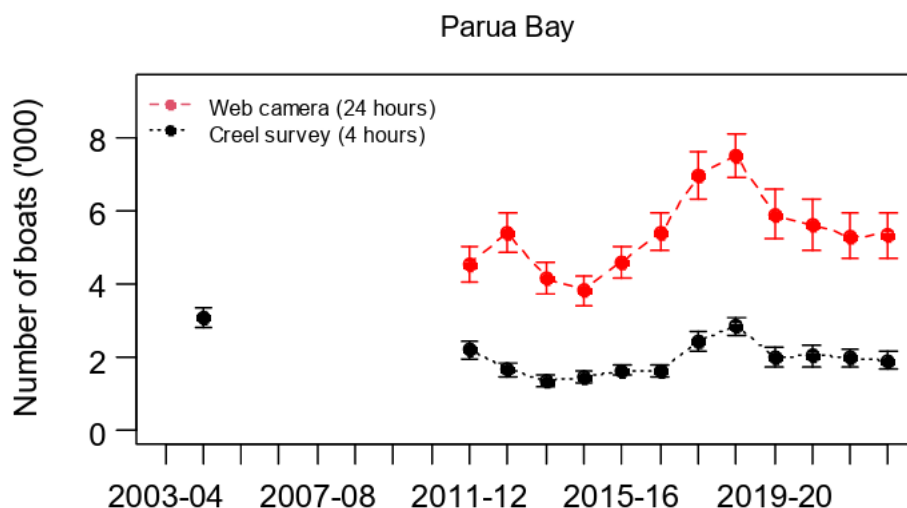


Figure 16 Annual estimates of numbers of boats returning to Parua Bay Club ramp based on digital camera imagery and creel survey (human observation). Fisheries NZ 2024

The Fisheries (Kaimoana Customary Fishing) Notice (No. 1) 2009 (No. F482) (Patuharakeke) came into effect on 8 May 2009 and a Fisheries (Notification of Tāngata Kaitiaki/Tiaki) for Area/Rohe Moana of Ngāti Kahu, Parawhau, Ngāti Tu and Patuharakeke) Notice 2021 (Notice No. MPI 1353) came into effect on 15 July 2020. The areas included are shown in Figure 17. Figure 17 Customary Fishing Areas (National Aquatic Biodiversity System, Ministry for Primary Industries) Figure 17

These notices provide that the tangata kaitiaki/tiaki appointed for the areas may authorise any individual to take fisheries resources, managed under the Fisheries Act 1996, for customary food-gathering purposes from within the whole or any part of the area/rohe moana. No customary food-gathering of fisheries resources may take place in the area/rohe moana without an authorisation from a tangata kaitiaki/tiaki.

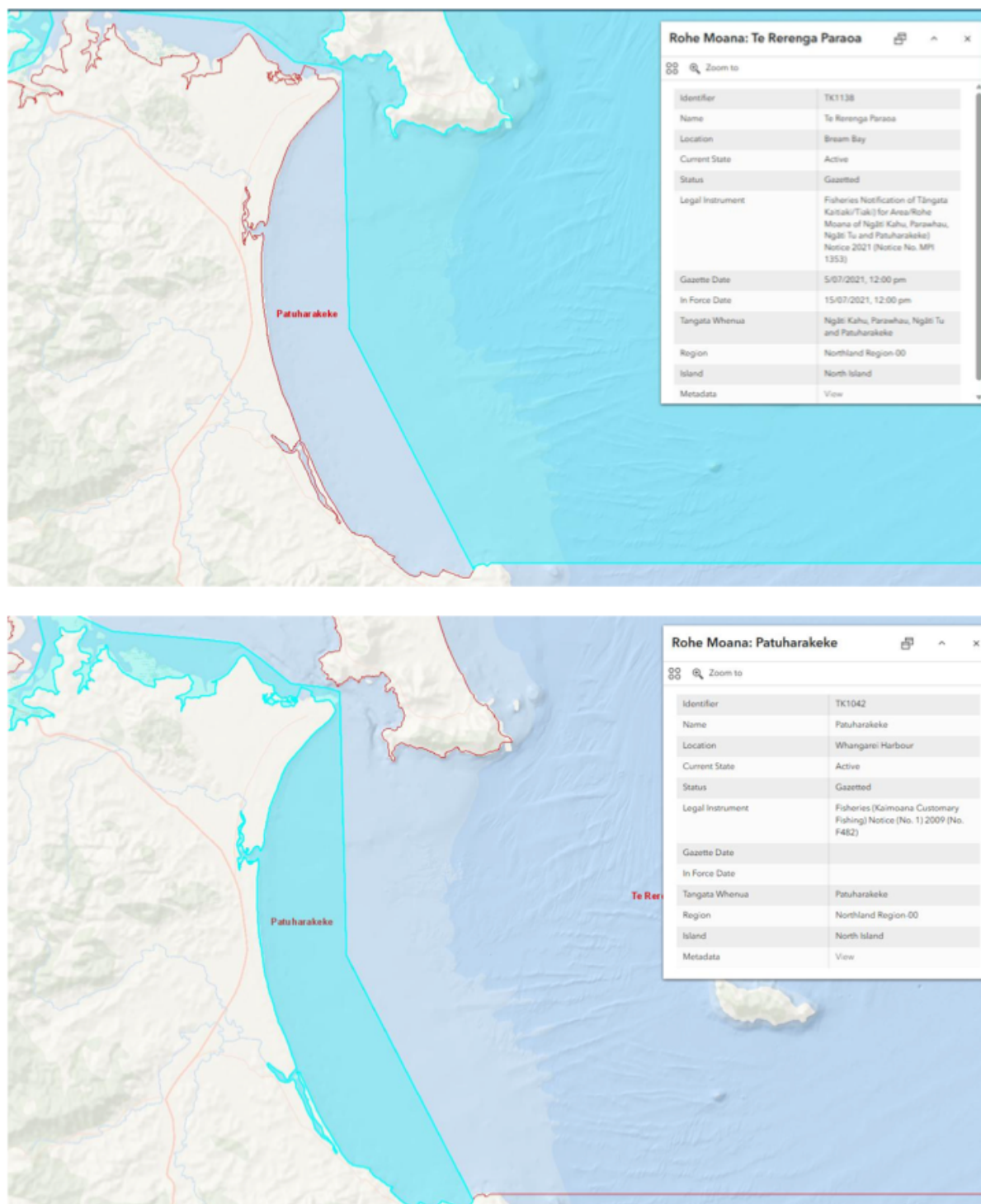


Figure 17 Customary Fishing Areas (National Aquatic Biodiversity System, Ministry for Primary Industries)

4.3.2 Non-motorised watersports

Stava data for all non-motorised watersports (Figure 18) shows the general patterns of use within the vicinity of the project site with boating activity focused on the area of One Tree Point and a strong intensity of boating activity (likely motorised) from Marsden Cove heading north along the coast north west of Busby Head and in general along the northern side of the Whangarei Harbour. The water taxi crossing of the harbour (as part of the Te Araroa trail) shows strongly as Te Araroa walkers

are more likely to use the Strava app than boating users. The western end of Marsden Beach indicates moderate level of use, most likely by Waka Ama and other non-motorised vessels. There appears to be little existing boating activity within the proposed project site.

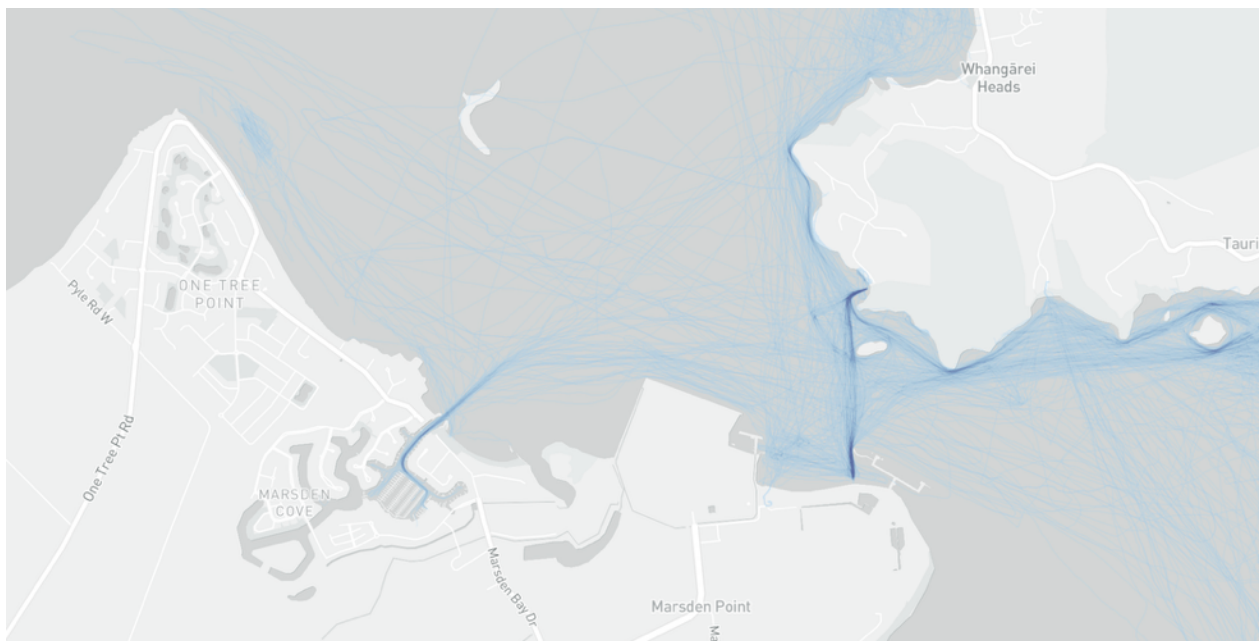


Figure 18 Recreational Use (all water sports) Strava (March 2025 – March 2026)

Te Kauika o Patuharakeke Waka Ama Incorporated facilitates waka ama at both a social and competitive level and has several waka stored at the western end of Marsden Beach. Waka ama is a growing sport in New Zealand.

4.3.3 Diving

The inner Whangārei Harbour provides limited recreational diving opportunity as underwater visibility is generally poor and often restricted to only a few metres, particularly following wind, rainfall, or tidal resuspension events. Seabed composition provides limited reef or hard-structure habitat, reducing both visual amenity and ecological diversity and tidal currents may be locally strong in channels, further constraining safe diving conditions.

The harbour entrance and adjacent Whangārei Heads coastline represent a transition from estuarine to open coastal conditions, characterised by rocky headlands, reefs, and submerged outcrops, increased wave exposure and oceanic flushing; and improved water clarity relative to the inner harbour.

Documented dive locations in the harbour entrance / Whangārei Heads area include Reotahi Bay, McLeods Bay, Taurikura, Urquharts Bay, and Taiharuru ("The Gut"). The Whangārei Heads and entrance area represents the primary local shore-based diving resource in the Whangārei area supporting recreational diving at beginner to intermediate levels, depending on site exposure and provides moderate amenity value, including reef-based marine life, improved underwater visibility and

accessible entry points from shore. These factors result in more suitable and widely used dive conditions. No recreational diving activity is documented within the proposed project area.

4.3.4 Boating

The Northland Regional Plan identifies one regionally significant anchorage in Parua Bay and three other recognised recreational anchorages being Munro Bay, Taurikura Bay and Urquharts Bay. (Figure 19).

Casual boating anchorages also include McLeods Bay and Marsden Bay to the west of the Port near the entrance to Marsden Cove. Other facilities as shown on Figure 20 include boat ramps, boating and yachting clubs and a water ski access lane at Limestone Island.

Consents for swing moorings near Northport are shown in Figure 21 and Figure 22. These are largely within a Mooring Zone although three moorings extend east of the Zone towards Northport, and two on the edge of or within the Marsden Point Port Zone.

The preferred approach to Marsden Point for small vessels is described by Thatcher (2016):

“Because Whangarei Harbour is used by a large amount of commercial shipping, there are numerous buoys and beacons marking the channels. When entering the harbour from the north it is quite safe to hold close in alongside the Bream Head side of the harbour; there is deep water here right into the shoreline with no off lying hazards. In fact, this is often preferable for smaller vessels as it keeps one well away from the commercial shipping channels.”

The majority of recreational boating activity follows this advice with the exception of traffic heading to and from Marsden Cove and the occasional recreational and water taxi traffic to the eastern fishing pontoon. Boat traffic heading to and from Marsden Cove must observe the existing Marsden Point and Northport Prohibited Areas.



*Figure 19 Regionally significant anchorage (red) and recognised recreational anchorages (yellow)
Northland Regional Plan*

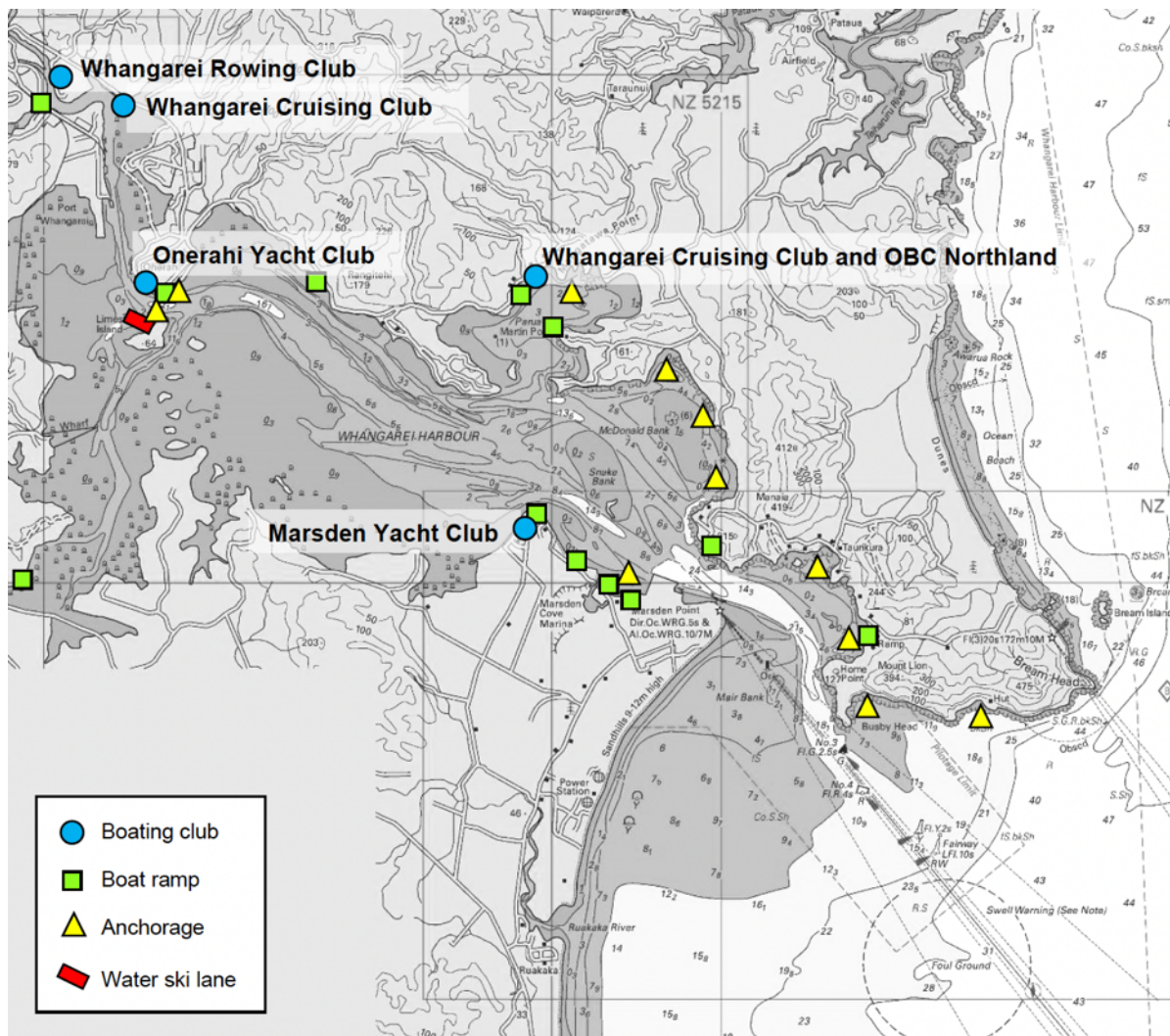


Figure 20 Anchorages and boating clubs and facilities around Whangarei Harbour (Greenaway 2022)



Figure 21 Moorings Marsden Bay (NRC) 7 April 2026

IRIS ID	Activity Sub Type	Status	x	y	Mooring No.
AUT.034795.01.01	Non MM4 Swing Mooring	Current	1733384.77	6033837.53	M2464
AUT.034155.01.01	Non MM4 Swing Mooring	Current	1733484.72	6033775	n/a
AUT.034157.01.01	MM4 Swing Mooring	Current	1733276.41	6033841.02	M1781
AUT.035925.01.01	Non MM4 Swing Mooring	Current	1733458.12	6033808.69	M3822



Figure 22 Coastal Permits for moorings near Marsden Cove channel (May 2025) (NRC)

4.3.5 Kitesurfing

Primary locations for kitesurfing are Onerahi/Upper harbour, Parua Bay, Taurikura / McLeod Bay / Whangārei Heads and Ruakaka Beach. Secondary sites include One Tree Point and Marsden Bay. A commercial kitesurfing school previously operated in Ruakaka but is no longer operating.

5. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

This section outlines the potential adverse effects on recreational use that may arise from the proposal, along with potential mitigation and management measures. It is informed by:

- identification of all adverse effects on recreational amenity,
- review of technical assessments relating to these effects, including consideration of their scale and significance,
- summary of the effects likely to influence recreational amenity, and
- evaluation of the magnitude of these effects and the extent to which they can be mitigated or managed.

Effects on amenity from a landscape perspective are addressed in the assessment prepared by Brown NZ Ltd. That report evaluates effects on landscape values, including those associated with the northern bays of Whangārei Harbour, such as the recreational environments of Urquharts Bay and Home Point, among others. This recreation assessment does not revisit or duplicate those landscape findings.

There is no widely accepted prescribed methodology in New Zealand for assessing effects on recreation. However, recreation assessments commonly adopt a structured effects-based approach consistent with Resource Management Act practice.

This assessment has identified the likely potential effects on recreation, having regard to both the construction and operational phases of the proposal and then assessed the significance of identified effects by considering:

- the value and sensitivity of the recreation resource or activity affected; and
- the scale, magnitude, duration, and geographic extent of the change arising from the proposal.

The significance of effects is then evaluated using professional judgement, taking into account the nature of the affected recreation opportunity, the degree of change anticipated, and the extent to which the affected values are important to users or to the wider recreation network.

The scale of effects described in this section use the following definitions.¹⁰

Nil – no, or de minimis adverse effects in the recreation setting.

A '**low**' effect refers to a small change in the recreation setting, but where the original recreational activities can continue and many participants may be unaware of a change in the setting.

A '**moderate**' effect refers to an activity opportunity where a shift in the recreation setting may modify the characteristics of an activity – such as the frequency it may be undertaken, the location of the favoured sites, and some of the activity's qualities – but the activity setting retains most or many of its original values and the activity may continue to be pursued and enjoyed.

A '**high**' effect represents a setting where the opportunity remains, but there are important and unavoidable adverse effects on the scale of opportunity retained or the values which contribute to the quality and availability of the existing experience.

A '**significant**' effect refers to an activity opportunity or setting characteristic that is removed or severely constrained (to be rarely available), and/or where a basic management categorisation of a setting is altered or where a component of development proposal is incompatible with the management categorisation.

There may be positive effects on recreation as a result of the project, and these are discussed where relevant.

5.1 Potential adverse effects

This assessment has identified the following potential effects on recreation, having regard to both the construction and operational phases of the proposal.

5.1.1 Construction

- Closure of existing recreational access to the existing western fishing pier and associated revetment walkway
- Occupation of marine settings by dredges and/or other construction machinery working or in transit and the creation of hazards for boat users
- Disturbance associated with dredging activities may (noting that in each case, ecological effects associated with dredging will be separately assessed by Coast & Catchment):
 - influence marine ecological conditions, including the quality, availability, and ease of harvesting marine species during the dredging period

¹⁰ I have adopted definitions commonly used by Mr R.Greenaway who has extensive experience in recreation effects assessment in New Zealand.

- reduce water clarity potentially affecting recreational areas—particularly swimming and diving locations—at and near the harbour entrance.
- result in sediment disturbance, potentially releasing contaminants, which could impact shellfish and other seafood resources, as well as water-contact recreation activities.

5.1.2 Operation

- Changes to navigation patterns of recreational boats due to expanded port and increased large tonnage vessel maneuvering
- Changes to currents and wave patterns resulting from altered bathymetry (separately assessed by MetOcean Solutions).
- Effects on marine ecology – particularly fish and shellfish species taken recreationally – from occupation of the seabed by the reclamation and by discharge of stormwater from the operational wharf area (separately assessed by Coast & Catchment).
- Changes to the western fishing pier and associated walkway
- Changes to the recreation value of the small beach and surrounds associated with the government purpose wildlife

Effects on ‘amenity’ from a landscape perspective are assessed by Brown NZ Ltd. Mr Brown’s assessment considers effects on landscape values surrounding the project site and from the northern bays of Whangarei Harbour which includes the recreation settings of Urquharts Bay and Home Point (and others). Effects from noise as they relate to recreation are assessed by Marshall Day Acoustics (terrestrial noise) and Styles Group (underwater noise). Effects on navigational safety in relation to recreational users is assessed by Mr Goodchild.

This recreation assessment does not reconsider those assessments.

5.2 Effects assessment

5.2.1 Construction

Access closures

During construction, access to the western fishing pier and revetment walkway will be closed although it is anticipated that there will be no direct impact on the Blacksmiths Creek walkway which will remain open (excluding direct beach access) during construction.

There are many alternative public access points to the harbour that provide options for fishing, swimming and beach walking, as identified in Section 4.2.1. It is proposed to reconstruct the western fishing pier and revetment walkway as part of the construction works so the loss of access will be temporary. The effects from this closure will be minor with users able to utilise the eastern fishing pier during the construction phase until the replacement walkway and pier reopens.

The effect is assessed as moderate – the location of activity will change temporarily to the eastern pontoon but the activity can continue.

Occupation of marine settings

Proposed dredging and reclamation is described in the MetOcean Solutions Dredge Plume Modelling Report (May 2026).

The area proposed for dredging and reclamation is already subject to navigation restrictions and existing maintenance dredging activities and there is minimal existing boating activity in the proposed project site.

Movement of large commercial vessels associated with the adjacent Northport facility is expected and well anticipated by recreational boat users. Only minor alterations to the regular course between Marsden Cove and Bream Head will be required. Effects of dredging activity on recreational boating are therefore assessed as low.

Disturbance associated with dredging activities

The MetOcean Solutions Dredge Plume Modelling findings show that “plume dispersion and deposition footprints generally align along a distinct northwest-southeast axis” away from the northern side of the harbour which is used for recreational diving,

The Assessment of Marine Ecological Effects (Coast & Catchment, Kelly and Sim-Smith 2026) assessed that “the impacts on fish, per se, are expected to be low and temporary”. The likely effects on fish habitat and therefore recreational fishing are therefore considered to be low.

5.2.2 Operation

Changes to navigation patterns for recreational boats

The area is proposed to be reclaimed has minimal existing boating activity as shown in Figure 18. Recreational boats travelling to and from Marsden Cove will need to make a minor alteration to their course further to the north to avoid the shipyard and any navigation restrictions in place around it. The area surrounding Northport area is already subject to navigation restrictions and existing maintenance dredging activities.

Navigation safety has been assessed in detail by the separate report by Northport/Bruce Goodchild, and it is sufficient to note that heavy ship activity near Northport is expected and well anticipated by recreational boat users. Heavy ship movements are anticipated to typically take about one hour to complete and to occur twice per week. During ship movements, small craft will need to divert around the shipyard. The main channel will be free for ship and recreation movements as it is far enough north of the proposed shipyard.

Other water users such as kayakers and kitesurfers will need to move further north and east of the proposed shipyard where the recreation setting, wind and water conditions are very similar to the area proposed to be occupied by the shipyard.

Recreational craft are expected to continue operating around the proposed port facilities much as they do now, although skippers may need to take extra care in a busier port environment. Experience in other major harbours, including Auckland and Tauranga, shows that recreational boating can coexist with substantial port activity without material disruption.

Effects on recreational boating are therefore assessed as low.

Changes to marine ecology

Overall, the effect of losing fish habitat within the proposed reclamation footprint is expected by Coast & Catchment (2026) to be low at the scale of the outer harbour and entrance zone, Marsden Bay zone and the One Tree Point to Marsden Bay Significant ecological area. They note that reclamation will eliminate around 509m of existing rock revetment that provides marine reef habitat. This will be smothered and replaced with around 617m of rock revetment and additional pile structures around the suspended deck drydock berth pocket. They assess the effect of reclamation on reef habitat and biota as low immediately, and positive in the medium to long term at all scales. This may therefore have positive effects for recreational fishing opportunities in the medium to long term when accessed from the western fishing pier and revetment wall.

Changes to the western fishing pier and associated walkway

It is proposed to reinstate the existing fishing platform currently located on the western edge of the Northport facility, to be westward and slightly northward to near the north western end of the revetment wall. The pier will be accessed by a 2.5m wide access path and screened from port operations by a 4m high noise barrier similar in design to the current arrangement. The total distance from the end of the Blacksmiths Creek walking track where the track joins the revetment wall is approximately 550m compared with the current approximately 422m. The slightly longer distance will be a positive effect for some recreational users such as walkers and runners while it will be a minor inconvenience for people carrying fishing gear.

The fishing pier will be of similar length and width as the current pier, providing the same functionality as the current pier. The end of the proposed pier will likely be in slightly deeper water of approximately -8m CD which may prove more favourable for fishing.

Overall the effect on access to the fishing pier during operation is assessed as nil.

Changes to the suitability of the area for bird watching

Access for birdwatching will remain unchanged. Bull (2026) has assessed the effects on avifauna to be low to very low following the application of effects management other than for northern NZ dotterel and kororā.

The effect on birdwatching activity is assessed as low.

Changes to the recreation value of the small beach and surrounds at Blacksmiths Creek walkway

Approximately 70m of beach located at the end of the Blacksmiths Creek walkway (Figure 24) will be incorporated into the project works comprising revetment walls and hardstand (Figure 23).

A portion of beach (including approximately 320m² of unformed legal road), will be incorporated into the project works while the remaining beach to the west will be less attractive to use as the outlook across the harbour will be screened by the proposed shipyard. The beach (and associated harbour views) is the destination of the walkway and 'turnaround point' for those walkers who do not travel onto the western fishing pier. The existing environment surrounding the beach is heavily modified by the presence of heavy industrial activities including the port and petroleum import and distribution terminal and is influenced by the existing Northport revetment wall and noise barrier.



Figure 23 Proposed Ship Yard in relation to beach and legal road



Figure 24 Beach looking west from near existing revetment wall



Figure 25 Beach looking south from existing revetment wall

As discussed in Section 4.2.1 there are many opportunities to access the local beaches and most with higher amenity and naturalness values than this beach. Nonetheless the loss of a portion of this beach and available harbour views will be significant for users of the Blacksmith Creek walkway.

The effect is assessed locally significant for those users of the Blacksmith Creek walkway – while a portion of the beach remains, and there are many similar opportunities nearby, there are unavoidable effects on the quality and availability of the existing experience. In the district/regional context, this effect is likely to be significant for recreational users of the beach and more than minor at the local scale.

Changes to the recreation value of the Government Purpose (Wildlife Management) reserve

There is some evidence of informal foot access into the Government Purpose (wildlife management) reserve, presumably by people exploring this area or bird watching. While this activity can continue, the quality of the experience will be changed. In the district/regional context, this effect is likely to be low for the few recreational users of the government purpose wildlife reserve and more than minor at the local scale.

5.2.3 Cumulative effects

I have considered the cumulative effects associated with the proposed facility and the effects of the consented, but not yet constructed, Northport reclamations to the east of the existing port. Those proposed reclamations are shown in Figure 26 below.

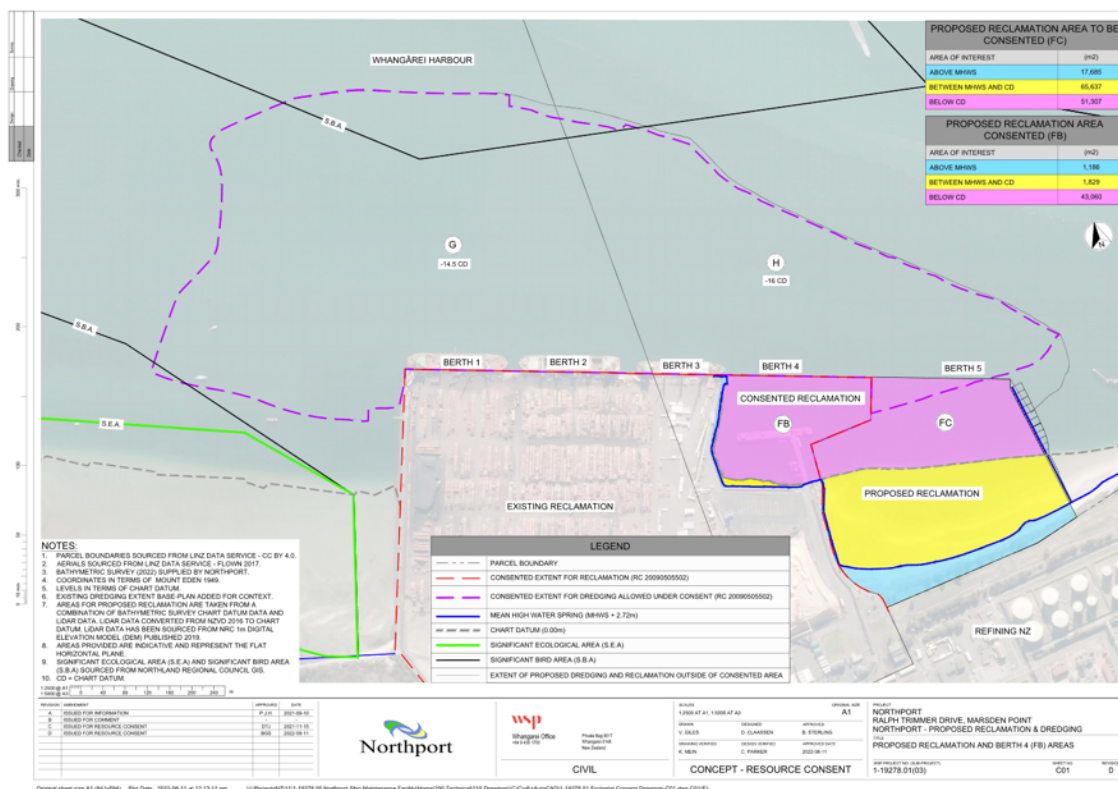


Figure 26 Northport consented and proposed reclamations

Greenaway 2022 describes the proposed and consented eastern reclamations as follows;

“The proposed reclamation footprint is approximately rectangular with a total area of approximately 13.0ha. Design height of the land will match the existing Northport levels, being a minimum of 5m above chart datum. The land will be built using dredge spoil (sands and silts) and imported material (sand, rock and gravel). Dredging is proposed largely within an already consented area, but with some additional work required outside this site. Three dredge methods are under consideration: a trailing suction hopper dredger (TSHD), a cutter suction dredger (CSD) and/or a backhoe dredger (BHD). It is assumed the entire footprint will be reclaimed, with a wharf on the northern edge (an extension of the existing Northport wharf) and a rip-rap protected batter slope on the eastern edge. The proposed land use for the proposed reclamation is ‘Port Activities’, and a container terminal is the proposed primary use. Figure 3 shows the location and scale of the proposed reclamation, which will occupy a large part of the Marsden Bay Beach. Northport has committed to maintaining public access to the remaining beach area from Ralph Trimmer Drive, and parking and toilets, and access to deep water for fishing in replacement for the existing fishing pontoon.”¹¹

The overall cumulative effects of the consented Berth 4 reclamation, the proposed eastward reclamation and the proposed shipyard and drydock reclamation will be high. Both the proposed eastward reclamation and the proposed shipyard and drydock reclamation will result in unavoidable adverse effects on the scale of recreation opportunity retained or the values which contribute to the quality and availability of the existing experience. I consider these effects to be high at the local level and more than minor at the regional level.

5.2.4 Positive effects

The proposed western edge of the shipyard will be approximately 200m from the two consented swing moorings on the edge of or within the Marsden Point Port Zone (Figure 21). The shipyard will create increased shelter for these moorings in easterly conditions.

This effect is assessed as a minor positive effect.

6. MITIGATION, OFFSETS AND COMPENSATION

6.1 Accessible pier and walkway

The existing pier is not accessible by wheelchair or for those with impaired mobility (Figure 27). The Blacksmiths Creek walkway is built to a standard that is largely barrier free and readily accessible until

¹¹ Northport Ltd Proposed Reclamation Recreation Effects Assessment (Greenaway 2022)

the point where the walkway climbs onto the existing revetment wall. As discussed in 3.3.1, the Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Strategy advocates for the development of accessible walkways.

It is recommended that consideration be given to ensuring that the connection of the Blacksmiths's Creek walkway to the proposed revetment wall, the revetment wall path and the new fishing pier be fully accessible. This will require the formation of a well graded ramp from the end of the existing walkway to the top of the revetment wall and an accessible path of well compacted gravel along the revetment wall to the proposed fishing pier. The fishing pier will then need to be constructed at or near the height of the revetment wall. This would enable a fully accessible fishing and recreational opportunity of benefit to the Whangarei district and consistent with the goals of the Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Strategy and provide some compensation for the localised loss of beach and recreational amenity and offer a positive community benefit.



Figure 27 Existing fishing pier

6.2 Bird hide

Bird watching activity can be assisted by the provision of a suitable hide. A hide can consist of a short section of 2m high screen fence, with a view opening and seat, placed in proximity to bird habitat to assist with bird watching. Provision of a suitable hide facing out towards Blacksmith Creek and the proposed bird roost, may provide an additional recreation facility to support bird watching.

7. CONCLUSION

Table 1 below summarises my assessment of effects on recreation.

Table 1 Summary of assessment of effects during operation

Effect	User	Assessment without mitigation	Assessment after mitigation
Changes to navigation patterns of recreational boats	Boat users	Low	Low
Changes to fishing pier and revetment walkway	Fishers, recreational walkers and cyclists	Nil	Positive
Changes to recreation value of small beach	Beach users	Significant - more than minor at local scale	Significant - more than minor at local scale
Changes to recreation value of Government Purpose Wildlife Reserve	Bird watchers	Low	Low

The proposed shipyard will have adverse effects on the recreational use of the small beach located at the end of the Blacksmiths Creek walkway. The reduced scale of the beach and associated loss of views and amenity are likely to be significant for recreational users of the beach and more than minor at the local scale.

When considered with the cumulative effects of the consented and proposed eastward reclamations, the effects on recreation are likely to be high and more than minor at a regional level.

The existing western fishing pier and revetment walkway will be reinstated in a similar location, slightly farther from their current position. The replacement will provide a like-for-like, and potentially improved, fishing opportunity due to access to deeper water, with minimal effect on recreational users apart from temporary closure during construction.

Effects on recreational users of the harbour are considered to be low, with recreational craft likely to continue navigating around the proposed port facilities much as they do at present, although skippers may need to exercise increased caution in response to a busier port environment.

There are potential opportunities to mitigate the effects of the proposal on recreation by improvement of the accessibility of the Blacksmiths Creek Walkway, revetment walkway and fishing

pier to enable full use by those with mobility impairments which is consistent with the goals of the Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Strategy. There may also be opportunities to improve bird watching opportunities.

Overall, the proposed shipyard and drydock facility, when considered in the context of an existing working port and heavily modified recreation setting, will have minimal effects on recreation users once in operation with access potentially enhanced through improved accessibility and better fishing opportunities in deeper water.

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