



## Marine Environment Policy

### Vision

The Green Party's vision is that:

- The marine environment is acknowledged for its intrinsic values.
- Use of marine resources is within sustainable limits.
- Endangered marine species are protected and supported to re-establish thriving population levels, including through a comprehensive network of marine reserves.
- The marine environment is healthy and unpolluted, with intact marine ecosystems.
- The sea has a network of large and small environmentally representative areas that are free from human interference.

### Key Principles

1. Marine biodiversity and ecosystems must be protected from pollution, unsustainable resource use, and activities that disrupt biodiversity.
2. Aotearoa New Zealand's oceans must include a network of environmentally representative marine reserves, free from disruptive human activities.
3. A precautionary approach is required for all new activities in the marine environment, recognising the complexity of marine ecosystems, gaps in scientific knowledge, and the interdependency of marine species.
4. Te Tiriti o Waitangi must be honoured, affirming iwi and hapū kaitiakitanga rights over the marine environment, and recognising that the marine environment is home to many taonga. The Green Party acknowledges that tangata whenua have a right to be involved in decision making over matters in the marine environment, by recognising the kaitiakitanga of hapū and rūnanga, and shared decision making with tangata whenua in all matters involving the marine environment.
5. The sea's biodiversity and ecosystems have intrinsic values, as well as cultural, spiritual and utilitarian values.

6. Those using the marine environment for commercial gain must protect the characteristics and values of marine ecosystems, and should bear the major cost of funding its protection from their activities and any required restoration, subject to acknowledging that the appropriate cost should reflect our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
7. Activities on land must be managed to avoid adverse effects on the marine environment.
8. The public have a right to be involved in decisions about management of the oceans
9. Aotearoa New Zealand should play an active role in supporting comprehensive international treaties for environmental management of the oceans

## Specific Policy Points

### 1 A Strategy to Sustain our Oceans

The Green Party supports a more co-ordinated approach to sustainable marine management at all levels of government, to ensure the integrity, functioning and biodiversity of marine ecosystems.

#### *Policy Positions*

- 1.1. Develop a comprehensive strategy for the marine environment, fully integrated with biodiversity strategies, to ensure integrated management of:
  1. Activities in the marine environment, including fishing, marine farming, marine transport, and extraction of mineral resources from the marine area.
  2. Land use activities that have effects on our coasts and oceans, focusing especially on agricultural run-off, storm-water management, and plastic pollution.
- 1.2. Review the relevant legislative, regulatory and administrative framework controlling activities affecting our marine waters to ensure unified, consistent processes and goals and consistency with international obligations
- 1.3. Enable tangata whenua to exercise their kaitiakitanga over the marine environment, including accessing their customary and commercial fishing resources.

## 2 Restoring Marine Biodiversity

Our oceans are not an infinite resource. Marine biodiversity has been significantly damaged by commercial fishing, pollution, and extraction of marine resources. The Green Party is committed to enabling our marine environment to recover. As well as the policies above, aimed at ensuring human activity stays within sustainable limits, we need to promote the restoration of marine biodiversity.

### *Policy Positions*

- 2.1. Implement a comprehensive marine protection strategy developed with stakeholders that creates targets and timetables for putting in place different categories of marine protection.
- 2.2. Legislate to make it easier to establish marine reserves and require a shared decision-making approach to ensure kaitiakitanga rights and customary fishing rights are protected.
- 2.3. Create a network of comprehensive, adequate and representative marine protected areas, co-designed using mātauranga, including:
  - a) Areas representing all marine eco-system types within our Exclusive Economic Zone, including coastal, seamount and deepwater areas which are critical for the maintenance of biodiversity, the replenishment of fisheries and the protection of cultural values
  - b) Areas adjacent to national parks (e.g. Fiordland), recognising the importance of marine feeding grounds to birds.
  - c) Areas near towns and cities, ensuring accessible educational, spiritual and recreational opportunities for people, recognising the cultural and heritage functions of marine reserves, in addition to their ecological and fisheries protection function
  - d) Areas covering important feeding and breeding grounds of endangered marine mammals, including extending the Auckland Islands trawl-free marine mammal sanctuary to protect the New Zealand Hooker's sealion and further restricting marine activities in the ranges of Maui and Hector's dolphins to achieve habitat protection and a zero by-catch of these species until marine mammal escape technologies are adequate for their protection.
- 2.4. Encourage the development of taiapure and mataitai/reserve initiatives, searching for win-win solutions that respect both ecosystem protection and customary rights.

- 2.5. Establish marine parks by working with communities in the initial developmental stages and ensuring these parks are managed by local people and tangata whenua.
- 2.6. Advocate for the maximum possible protection of marine mammals by:
  - a) Opposing all commercial and so-called 'scientific' whaling, and until that is achieved, supporting South Pacific and regional whale sanctuaries.
  - b) Prohibiting the further holding of marine mammals in captivity except as part of an approved threatened species recovery strategy.
  - c) Working to stop the disruptive exploitation of marine mammals.
- 2.7. Provide resources to allow marine biosecurity to be given the same level of importance as terrestrial biosecurity, including risk assessment, surveillance, incursion response and on-going pest control where all else fails.
- 2.8. Support international initiatives for marine conservation.

### 3 Marine Pollution

The marine environment has become increasingly polluted. Plastic pollution, industrial chemicals, agricultural run-off, oil spills and other pollution from marine transport all has a cumulative effect that harms marine ecosystems. We need to clean up our oceans and prevent further pollution.

#### *Policy Positions*

- 3.1. Support the development of a Waterways Restoration Strategy and other initiatives that improve the water quality of streams and harbours.
- 3.2. Amend the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, to address whole-catchment issues such as sewage disposal, run-off and sedimentation from urban development, forestry and agriculture.
- 3.3. Ensure that the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement is implemented at a local level.
- 3.4. Work to reduce plastic waste and prevent plastic pollution (see our [Environmental Protection](#) Policy).
- 3.5. Investigate ways of integrating coastal management to reduce conflict between different users, such as marine farmers, commercial and recreational fishers, recreational users, and local communities.
- 3.6. Require appropriate use of the International Maritime Organisation's restrictions on passage provisions (including routeing measures and pollution discharge regulations) to protect sensitive areas from potential marine pollution by freight and passenger vessels.

- 3.7. Exclude from sensitive marine environments ships that carry significant amounts of oil, and require oil and chemical tankers entering our territorial waters to be double-hulled.
- 3.8. Ensure that there is an ocean-going tug present in Aotearoa New Zealand at all times so that more rapid action can be taken in response to grounding of any large vessel.

#### **4 Sustainable Fisheries Management**

Aotearoa New Zealand's quota management system (QMS) has failed to effectively protect our fisheries resources, leaving them vulnerable to the same overexploitation that has devastated fish populations worldwide. Furthermore, industrial fishing methods have resulted in widespread damage to benthic ecosystems and by-catch of non-target species. The Green Party supports an ecosystem approach to fisheries management.

##### *Policy Positions*

- 4.1. Apply integrated marine ecosystem management to ensure fish and shellfish populations are maintained at ecologically healthy and resilient levels, recognising the dependencies between different species and the urgent need for intervention for some species.
- 4.2. Ensure kaitiakitanga is given effect, and ensure Māori fisheries rights are upheld in the transition to a more sustainable fisheries management system.
- 4.3. Enable ongoing, independent research on the state of our fisheries stocks, taking into account other environmental impacts that reduce population levels of commercial species, to ensure catch limits remain within levels that will allow fisheries to re-establish a more sustainable population.
- 4.4. In making decisions, provide Mātauranga Māori knowledge of sustainable management of fishing resources a prominent role, alongside sound scientific basis, and provide research support for tangata whenua to investigate methods of managing their customary fishing resources.
- 4.5. Support mechanisms such as resource rentals, designed in partnership with tangata whenua, to ensure Aotearoa New Zealand receives a return from commercial fisheries in its waters so that the financial benefits of fisheries can be used for marine sustainability initiatives.
- 4.6. Ensure allowable catches for species in regulatory frameworks are set at precautionary levels.

- 4.7. Manage all fish stocks taking an ecosystem approach and, where maximum sustainable yield (MSY) is used as a measure of population maintenance, ensure it is treated as a maximum, not a target, level.
- 4.8. Ensure that scientific observers, or other means of assessing catches, are on every significant vessel operating in Aotearoa New Zealand waters.
- 4.9. Introduce environmental impact assessments for fishing technologies, and increase research into the environmental effects of fishing methods and into more environmentally responsible fishing methods.
- 4.10. In accordance with findings of environmental impact assessments, more vigorously impose restrictions:
  - a) On fishing methods (e.g. bottom trawling and long-lining) with high catch rates of endangered species and/or high levels of ecosystem destruction.
  - b) On periods of fishing (e.g. during times when environmental conditions lead to fewer young fish reaching maturity).
  - c) On areas where fishing can occur (e.g. around the Auckland Island sea lion colonies).
- 4.11. Require use of best practice methods of fishing, including those to reduce by-catch.
- 4.12. Increase resources, for enforcement of commercial, recreational and customary fisheries regulations to deter illegal and unsustainable take.
- 4.13. Develop local fisheries management plans based on sound science and providing for fair participation in the process by all stakeholders.
- 4.14. Manage species whose population has declined significantly due to industrial fishing methods, such as kahawai and kingfish, primarily as recreational fisheries with quota set only for unavoidable by-catch.
- 4.15. Manage marine flora, such as seaweeds, and other relatively immobile life forms, such as sponges and pāua, on a local area basis rather than in large Quota Management Areas in order to avoid local depletion.
- 4.16. Set a target of near-zero fishing-related mortality of marine mammals, turtles, endangered seabirds, and other threatened marine species, for all fisheries, and close relevant fisheries as soon as a limit is reached.
- 4.17. Protect the viability of small commercial fishers and fishing communities as essential components of the fishing industry by, for example:
  - a) Supporting the role of small commercial fisheries in sustainably providing for New Zealanders to be able to consume seafood, recognising that many cannot catch it for themselves.

- b) Investigating opportunities for developing quota in a local pool that can only be owned within a specific geographical area.
  - c) Revising cost recovery and administration charges so that costs are more in proportion to the commercial benefit derived from the fishery.
- 4.18. Require foreign vessels chartered by Aotearoa New Zealand companies and New Zealand owned or registered vessels to abide by Aotearoa New Zealand law wherever they are operating.
- 4.19. Ensure retention of Aotearoa New Zealand control and utilisation of our fisheries.

## 5 Aquaculture

The Green Party will ensure sustainable management of aquaculture and protect the public interest in other marine activities.

### *Policy Positions*

- 5.1. Establish National Environmental Standards for aquaculture, based on sound scientific evidence about the environmental impacts of different types of aquaculture practices. In the absence of scientific consensus, a precautionary approach should be taken.
- 5.2. Require regional councils to recognise the kaitiaki role of hapū when developing regional coastal plans and aquaculture management areas.
- 5.3. Ensure regional councils cannot enter confidentiality agreements with aquaculture operators over scientific information relevant to sustainability decisions.
- 5.4. Promote the use of marine permaculture to enable harvesting of farmed marine species, including kelp, without the introduction of artificial feed.
- 5.5. Promote the potential for marine permaculture to sequester carbon dioxide.

## 6 Fisheries Research

To support a move to a marine ecosystem management approach, fisheries research needs to consider relationships within ecosystems, rather than focusing on managing specific commercial fish stocks. Regulations need to enable interventions to restore balanced ecosystems when depletion of one species has flow on effects that disrupt the biodiversity of an area.

### *Policy Positions*

- 6.1. Support a major increase in multidisciplinary research to enhance understanding of marine and coastal ecosystems.

- 6.2. Increase research into the environmental effects of fishing methods and into more environmentally responsible fishing methods.
- 6.3. Provide research support for tangata whenua to investigate methods of managing their commercial and customary fishing resources.
- 6.4. Ensure research findings are publicly available and transparently funded.
- 6.5. Develop marine biosecurity risk assessment and control protocols.

## 7 Other Industrial Activities

Harm from industrial activities, must be avoided, remedied and mitigated as far as possible.

- 7.1. Ensure the regulatory environmental management framework for the sea beyond the 12-mile limit fully implements New Zealand's international responsibilities to preserve and protect the marine environment.
- 7.2. Ensure those involved in industrial activities are held responsible for any costs involved in cleaning up pollution or other damage they cause to the marine environment, and require full insurance.
- 7.3. Protect the marine environment from mining activities (see our [Mining Policy](#)).
- 7.4. Support, where environmental impact can be managed, the shift of freight movements to coastal shipping. With the majority of our processing and manufacturing centres near the coast, considerable fuel savings could be made by moving freight by sea rather than by road (see our [Transport Policy](#)).

## 8 Education

Although many people now accept that we cannot continue to dump waste into the sea, many still think of the sea as a vast, uniformly abundant area from which we can take what we need indefinitely. There is an urgent need for education about the sea, where ecosystems are much less understood than on land.

### *Policy Positions*

- 8.1. Ensure that the people of Aotearoa New Zealand have access to whole community-based environmental education, which supports and promotes the long-term sustainability of the marine environment through:
  - a) Promoting understanding of marine ecosystems by developing cross-curricula, cross-cultural, hands-on models both within and outside of the classroom.

- b) Reflecting the physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual dimensions of people's interrelationships with the marine environment, at all ages and stages of life.
  - c) Supporting the role of Māori education, both traditional and contemporary, from kohanga reo to kura kaupapa to whare wananga and in the mainstream.
  - d) Exposing 'greenwashing' in schools and other educational institutions by those sectors which have an exploitative interest in the marine environment.
  - e) Inspiring, informing and resourcing the community at large to take positive action for the marine environment.
- 8.2. Ensure that Aotearoa New Zealand-based tertiary education and research opportunities in marine sciences, are promoted, emphasising standards of excellence.

## 9 Aotearoa New Zealand's international role

The world's marine ecosystems are under threat and Aotearoa New Zealand is well placed to take independent, principled stances on the global stage (see our [Global Affairs](#) Policy).

### *Policy Positions*

- 9.1. Advocate for strengthened agreements managing the ecological health of the high seas, with a particular focus on extending marine protected areas, restoring marine biodiversity and ending plastic and chemical pollution.
- 9.2. Promote better international management of high seas fisheries, and better international control of destructive and illegal fishing practices.