

NZ First's Response to the 10 'Asks' for the Ocean 2023

1. Commit to protecting at least 30% of New Zealand's ocean territory by 2030 through a representative network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) – and to delivering the legislative reform and implementation funding needed to achieve this.

NZ First is a centrist party that seeks to gain and understand the best evidence and intelligence when deciding on any issue. In this regard NZF will look to balance rights and interests and do what's best for both our ocean ecosystems and our people.

The 30% target must be informed by a robust cost benefit analysis. This requires a balance of rights and interests to underpin any platform of sustainability. There is great scope to improve our GDP from the ocean. This includes our fishing industry as well as expanding the marine farming sector. Any commitment to 30% needs to be balanced against food production, protein supply and exports.

Circumscribing 30% of our marine territory could mark the beginning of the end for NZs fishing industry. Most of the fish caught are on our continental shelf or slope and not out in the open ocean. Most of the healthy ocean biodiversity and ecosystems are on or near structure – reefs, land islands, estuaries, harbours, and channels.

NZF would seek to find the optimal balance between preserving and enriching our ocean ecosystems and upholding the rights of our fishing industry, aquaculture, and recreational fishing. We would also come down hard on law breakers, no matter who.

The Marine Reserves Act is also now out of date and NZF would seek to ensure that any updates would be in line with new evidence-based approaches.

2. Ensure that Aotearoa's marine management regime upholds the rights of tangata whenua and recognises indigenous approaches to ocean conservation.

NZ First acknowledges that the law recognises Māori customary rights, one of the 'interests' mentioned above. The ability of Māori to manaaki visitors on the marae is valuable to Māori, New Zealanders, and visitors alike. However, NZ First has no time for the blatant unlawful exercise of customary rights and would want more precise understanding in law of what is and is not included in customary take and how that applies to MPAs, for example.

Indigenous approaches to ocean conversation must be combined with scientific evidence. As a centrist party NZF takes a pragmatic evidence-based approach and would want to use the best approach available to us for marine management.

Technologies change and as climate change alters the marine environment Māori perspectives should not be excluded. However they are a part of a bigger approach not separate.

3. Commit to restoring our declining marine biodiversity by implementing an effective ecosystem-based management system, which also provides for the effective control of invasive species like caulerpa.

We agree. We all want to stop the decline of marine biodiversity and control invasive species. No one wants to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. But we need the public and private sectors working together on this. Regulation is one thing, implementation is another. There are only so many resources to address the issue in NZ.

NZ First understands that without a healthy economy and industry we cannot afford to address invasive species or invasive practices. MPAs are a good start, regional councils might need more help, but caring for ships that enter our waters is another (see below on why we need a new drydock).

4. Ensure the protection of ecologically significant or particularly vulnerable marine habitats, including through the creation of a Kermadec / Rangitāhua Ocean Sanctuary and new MPAs in the Hauraki Gulf / Tīkapa Moana.

In respect of the Kermadecs there are interests, precedents and details that need to be resolved. NZ First's position re the Kermadecs is we already have marine protection areas up there. We will not be corralled by the Pew Charitable Trusts, USA. The proposed 620 sq km Ocean sanctuary does not enjoy consensus . Currently there are no Kiwi interests fishing in this location. During 2017-2020 we told Labour there would be no agreement to an ocean sanctuary without agreement from Maori Fisheries Comm, Te Ohukaimoana. This is due to the 1992 Sealord's fisheries settlement.

In respect of the Hauraki Gulf, I'm sure the fishing industry would not like to see the continuation of skinny white schnapper being caught. Which is probably why there is not much activity closer to Auckland. We don't think the fishing industry are to blame - the environment inside the Hauraki gulf is predominantly the fault of land based activities in our largest city, alongside sewerage and waste water (that's another discussion!)

The Hauraki gulf MPA is huge (4000 km²) extending from Whangamata on the coromandel peninsula, firth of Thames Hauraki Gulf, Waitemata harbour to Great barrier and Pakiri Beach in the North. It has 100 hundred islands over 10 Acres and five marine reserves in it. It is important that restrictions to boost marine life be borne by all citizens. There should not be any carve outs for local tangata whenua until the overall ecosystem has improved. MPAs should be able to act as nurseries, protecting marine habitats, but allowing for neighbouring fishing grounds and aquaculture activities to be sustainable. Commercial fishers do not want to wreck their nets on reefs and they do want their fish abundant.

5. Reform the Quota Management System to require our fisheries stocks to be managed for abundance and resilience, and to safeguard them for future generations.

All resource management systems require improvements from time to time. NZ First however believes that the QMS has delivered benefits both economically and environmentally. Any changes have to ensure that a new system takes account of recreational and customary interests.

6. Ban bottom-impact fishing methods and seabed mining on vulnerable and highly biodiverse marine ecosystems, including seamounts and similar features.

NZ First wants to use the power of the private sector to partner in innovation to ensure economic sustainability as well. This is already happening. NZ needs a healthy sustainable fishing and aquaculture industries.

The issue again will be deciding what is vulnerable and highly biodiverse. Our regime already protects sea mounts and other hard bottom seabed features where practicable. NZ First does not agree with banning fishing where the seabed is sand or sediment for example. A ban bottom impact fishing on mud or sand doesn't make sense.

7. Improve protection for our endangered, threatened, and protected marine species – including by mandating the use of best practice mitigation technology to reduce fisheries bycatch to a target of zero by 2030.

Bycatch can never be zero. Best practice is an important feature of sustainable fishing. Additional effort should be put into safeguarding seabirds.

8. Implement fully transparent and traceable fisheries management through the use of monitoring systems (e.g. cameras or observers) across all commercial fishing fleets, and by making captured data publicly accessible.

NZ First believes the above suggestions are too invasive. It has significant implications for small businesses with heavy regulations only adding further costs and pushing small business owners out of the industry

There are issues around making all of the data publicly accessible, mainly around privacy. What needs to be sorted first is how we manage this incredible amount of data and video and for what purpose.

NZ First is the party that has sought to fund our military properly and has supported building an adequate (controlled environment) dry dock in Northland.

The Navy needs to be able to patrol our waters effectively with frigates, OPVs and IPVs and the Airforce are to receive 6 new long haul more fuel efficient Hercules and 4 more Orions (we used to have 6 so 2 more would be good)

A Drydock would stop our large boats (Aotearoa and the Interisland Ferries for example) burning fossil fuels to be serviced and exporting our waste to other jurisdictions. It would also provide an alternative for large ships unable to enter our waters and others cleaning hulls just outside our 12-mile limit.

9. Address the land-based impacts threatening our coastal and marine ecosystems, including sedimentation, forestry slash, plastic pollution, and nutrient runoff.

Agree.

Biggest risk to inshore ecosystems is land based, especially in sheltered waters like the Waitemata harbour and wider Hauraki Gulf.

NZ First will prioritise rules to place a duty upon harvesters to contain and remove post-harvest slash. The Industry does not want to lose its social license to operate. To reiterate there is plenty to be done in limiting city pollution.

10. Prioritise the uptake of conservation initiatives and nature-based solutions to improve our ocean's resilience to climate change and to prevent and reverse biodiversity loss.

NZ First has a focus on adaptation in terms of Climate change. The ocean environment has much to offer as a carbon sink. NZ First wants to seek sustainable economic development opportunities that can give us win/wins such as kelp forests and ecosystem rejuvenation. Aquaculture innovation can help, including fin fish, with producing protein in smaller environments.