

**Title:** Marine Biosecurity Update and Proposed Inter-regional Pathway Plan  
**Section:** Environmental Services & Protection  
**Prepared by:** Lois Easton (Environmental & Science Manager)  
**Meeting Date:** 10 October 2018

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Legal     Financial     Significance = Medium

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## Report to ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING & REGULATIONS Committee for decision

### SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on marine biosecurity management in the region and the development of an inter-regional Marine Pathway Plan for Gisborne.

The need for a Pathway Plan was identified during the process of developing the Regional Pest Management Plan, and is a key action required to improve our management of marine biosecurity.

A Top of the North Marine Partnership of Northland, Bay of Plenty and Waikato Regional Councils, Auckland Council and Gisborne District Council is in place which Gisborne has been part of since 2016. Work has been undertaken by this group to work to develop provisions suitable for an inter-regional Marine Pathway Plan.

The work undertaken has reached the point where it is recommended that this Council confirm its commitment to participating in the Inter-regional Pathway Plan and undertake consultation with the community around the content of this.

The decisions or matters in this report are considered to be of **Medium** significance in accordance with the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**That the Environmental Planning & Regulations Committee:**

- 1. Notes the contents of this report.**
- 2. Approves the inclusion of the Gisborne Region being in an inter-regional Marine Pathway Plan to be prepared under the Biosecurity Act 1993 and the commencement of consultation on the content of the Plan.**

Authorised by:



Nicholas Zaman  
**Director Environmental Services & Protection**

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**Keywords:** Marine pests, biosecurity act, pathway plan

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## **BACKGROUND**

1. Marine pests have the potential to cause significant impacts to Gisborne's economy and environment. They also can have cultural and social impacts with significant threats to marine recreational values and abundance of kai moana. The Council has a statutory role to put in place rules and manage animal and plant pest management – including marine plant and animal pests, under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

### **Regional Pest Management Plan**

2. The Council undertook a review of its Regional Pest Management Plan in 2014-2016 and a new Regional Pest Management Plan was adopted in 2017. A number of marine pests are included within that Plan as follows:
  - Exclusion Pests – *Styela clava* (clubbed tunicate)
  - Eradication Pests – Mediterranean fanworm
  - Progressive Containment Pests – *Spartina*, *Undaria* (Japanese kelp).
3. In the case of Mediterranean fanworm a significant ongoing programme has been underway since 2015 jointly with the Ministry of Primary Industries to eradicate this pest from Gisborne Port. This consists of twice yearly dive monitoring of the port in spring and autumn. While fanworm has been found in every monitoring event, all finds are removed and sent for testing for breeding age. To date no fanworm have been found which have bred and the programme has been very successful at keeping exceedingly low numbers in the port.
4. While the Regional Pest Management Plan identifies a number of specific species for management, new pests are being identified – and coming into New Zealand every year. Recent examples of new pests arriving into other parts of New Zealand are:
  - *Pyura* sea squirt
  - Asian paddle crab (found for the first time this year)
  - *Eudistoma*.

### **Top of the North Marine Partnership**

5. In 2016, recognising the problem of marine pests, the Gisborne District Council joined the Top of the North Marine Partnership – a collaboration between Northland, Waikato, and Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Auckland Council and Gisborne District Council. This group has shared knowledge on marine pest management, developed joint communications campaigns and has been developing the core material to support the development of an Inter-regional Marine Pathway Plan. The success of the group has also encouraged Hawkes Bay Regional Council to engage on marine biosecurity issues, and their first assessment of their port area is planned for late summer in 2019.
6. The Regional Pest Management Plan and Operational Plan both recognise that a Pathway Management Approach is the key method to prevent the introduction of pests to new areas and preventing their spread from known infestations. As part of these Plans the development of a Marine Pathway Plan was proposed. The joint management approach of the Top of the North Marine Partnership is also provided for within these plans.

### **What is a Pathway Plan?**

7. A Pathway Plan is a statutory plan prepared under Sections 88-98 of the Biosecurity Act. It follows the same statutory process as a Regional Pest Management Plan and enables the regional council to put in place rules and methods relevant to the pest pathway, not just a pest species. A Pathway Plan targets the methods of spread and is particularly suitable when there are new incursions of yet to be identified pests.

8. In the case of marine pests the method of spread is well known as being as a result of the movement of boats. Marine pests come in on boat hulls and in ballast water transported from one marine environment to the next.

## DISCUSSION and OPTIONS

9. Auckland, Northland, Bay of Plenty and Waikato Councils have all formally agreed to progress an interregional Pathway Plan approach. Currently rules across the Councils vary with different versions of a "clean hull" rule. In some of these Councils a marine passport approach, requiring certification of frequency of cleaning and antifouling has been applied.
10. Gisborne District Council has included a "clean hull" rule in its Regional Pest Management Plan. Our rule, is as follows:

**Rule 1.04** *All vessels entering Gisborne District waters must be sufficiently cleaned and antifouled so that they have no more than a slime layer on the hull.*

11. While a useful rule for the interim (which was the intention) the wording of this rule puts the onus of proof of compliance heavily on Council, rather than the ship operator. This has been recently tested with the find of two Mediterranean fanworm on a vessel returning to Gisborne from Auckland and Coromandel.

### Options to Progress a Marine Pathway Plan

12. In terms of progressing a marine pathway approach there are two main options available to the Council: either align with our northern neighbours in terms of timeline and content as part of an inter-regional Marine Pathway Plan or embark upon a separate process within Gisborne.

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
Inter-regional Pathway Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enables leveraging of better resourced Councils' activity</li> <li>Common rule framework makes compliance simpler for boat owners</li> <li>Common compliance system able to developed across Councils will make it easier for GDC to administer eg vessel ID and passport system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More serious marine biosecurity problems in northern areas could result in a stronger rule framework than is necessary for Gisborne</li> </ul>
Gisborne Developed Pathway Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Still able to leverage some resources as part of Top of the North Marine Partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional cost to develop our own rules and cost-benefit analysis</li> <li>Potential for confusion for boat owners – different rules at different ports</li> <li>Will need to set up our own compliance framework to monitor boat activity</li> </ul>

13. Overall, it is considered that the advantages of an interregional approach outweigh the disadvantages.

### Content of any Inter-regional Pathway Plan

14. The Top of the North Councils have developed a draft Discussion Document on the options. These are as follow:

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Joint Consistent Rules for Clean Hulls	Joint Rules for Hulls but also for pathways like ballast water	Wait for National Rules

15. In terms of potential joint rules for clean hulls there are three options that have also been identified:

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Clean hull required <i>at all times</i>	Clean hull required when <i>moving between areas</i>	Clean hull required only when <i>moving to specifically identified places</i>

### Next Steps

16. If Gisborne District Council approves the recommendation to be a part of an inter-regional pathway plan, the consultation process on this will commence in line with the other participant regional councils.

### **ASSESSMENT of SIGNIFICANCE**

Criteria	This Report	The Process Overall
The effects on all or a large part of the Gisborne district	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>
The effects on individuals or specific communities	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>
The level or history of public interest in the matter or issue	<b>Low</b>	<b>Low</b>
Inconsistency with Council's current strategy and policy	<b>Low</b>	<b>Low</b>
Impacts on Council's delivery of its Financial Strategy and Long Term Plan.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Low</b>

17. The decisions or matters in this report are considered to be of **medium** significance in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.
18. Marine pests are a significant threat to our economy and in particular the crayfishery in Tairāwhiti. Marine pests also threatened cultural and recreational values around kai moana. They are a significant threat to environmental values. Despite this there is very little interest from the public or other stakeholders.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

19. Development of a Marine Pathway Plan requires a number of consultation steps under the Biosecurity Act, 1993. The first stage proposed is pre-consultation – issuing a joint discussion document and seeking public and stakeholder views on this.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **Financial/Budget**

20. Participation in the Top of the North Marine Partnership and development of a Marine Pathway Plan is included in the biosecurity work programme funded in the LTP.

**Legal**

21. A Marine Pathway Plan is a statutory plan under the Biosecurity Act, 1993, and specific steps are required for its development.

**POLICY and PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

22. The Regional Pest Management Plan and 2017-2019 Biosecurity Operational Plan both identify that the Council will continue to participate in the Top of the North Marine Partnership and provide for the development of a Marine Pathway Plan.

**RISKS**

23. Marine pests represent a significant threat to the crayfish industry, recreational and cultural fishery values and the environment. The development of a Marine Pathway Plan is intended to help address these risks.