



# Hauraki Gulf Transit Protocol for Commercial Shipping



The port of Auckland is located on the east coast of New Zealand's North Island in a nationally significant maritime area called the Hauraki Gulf, an area with Marine Park status.

The Hauraki Gulf is one of the few places in the world with a semi-resident population of Bryde's whale. The local whale population is small, estimated at less than 200, and is listed as critically endangered in New Zealand.

It is believed that around two Bryde's whales a year are killed after being struck by a vessel, which is a threat to the local population's long-term survival. That is why Ports of Auckland (POAL), the shipping industry, New Zealand's Department of Conservation (DOC), and Auckland University, are leading efforts to find ways to reduce the risk of colliding with a whale.

This protocol is part of that effort. It outlines steps Masters should take when planning their passage to and from Auckland, and what to do while transiting the Hauraki Gulf.

Your help in protecting our local whales is greatly appreciated.

**Tony Gibson**  
CEO, Ports of Auckland  
May 2014

## Reducing the risk of collisions with whales

### 1 Passage planning

Minimising the risk of collisions with whales should be a regular part of planning a passage. The best way to reduce risk is to avoid areas with the most whales. If it is not possible to do this, then where possible plan to slow down in these areas. There is good scientific evidence that the risk to whales is substantially less from ships travelling at 10 knots compared to 15 knots or more.

Vessels should approach and depart from the port of Auckland using the recommended route as outlined in the *New Zealand Annual Notices to Mariners, Section 10: Shipping routes around the New Zealand coast*. Adherence to this routing will narrow the area of the Gulf transited by large vessels and so help reduce the risk of collision with a whale.

When planning your route to and from Auckland, where possible allow for your vessel to reduce speed when transiting the Hauraki Gulf.





## 2 Keeping watch

Watch officers should be aware of what action to take if whales are seen. Large whales can often be seen at distances of several miles and seeing one whale is often a strong indication that there are others in the area. Modest course alterations away from sightings can reduce collision risk. Having a dedicated observer scanning ahead with binoculars will help to detect whales at greater distances.

- When transiting through the Hauraki Gulf, vessels are required to post whale lookouts during daylight hours.
- If a whale is sighted forward of the beam, slow down and/or change course to keep as far from the whales as possible. Whenever safe to do so, no vessel should pass less than 1,000 metres from a whale.

The image above is provided to assist crew with identification of Brydes Whales.

## 3 Reporting

Ports of Auckland Harbour Control operate a whale reporting and warning system for vessels transiting the Hauraki Gulf.

- All whale sightings should be immediately reported to Harbour Control as follows:

**“Auckland Harbour Control, Auckland Harbour Control, Auckland Harbour Control.”**

**“This is: [Vessel name, vessel name, vessel name]”**

**“Whale sighting report.”**

On making contact, please provide the following information:

- Position of sighting, either latitude and longitude or bearing and distance from a known landmark.
- Number of whales sighted
- Direction of movement in terms of three figure notation in degrees or as compass points.

The duty officer at Harbour Control will record your information for statistical analysis, transmit it to designated authorities by cell phone and will re-broadcast it by VHF 12, to inform all other vessels in the Hauraki Gulf area, in the following format:

**“All stations, All Stations, All Stations”**  
**“This is Harbour Control, Ports of Auckland.”**  
**“Sighting of [number] of large whale(s).”**  
**“At [location]”**  
**Direction of whale travel is [.....]”**  
**“If possible please avoid the vicinity, increase lookouts and reduce speed.”**  
**Out**

## Hauraki Gulf area

The area of the Hauraki Gulf commonly used by Bryde’s whales is shown in the map below.

## Conclusion

This protocol is a voluntary measure agreed between the Ports of Auckland and the shipping industry. It contains reasonable, practical measures which should, if widely adopted, reduce the number of whale deaths caused by vessels.

The protocol can only be effective if shipping lines and Masters co-operate. By taking avoidance measures, planning ahead and reducing speed whenever schedules permit, the industry will be able to address an issue of growing public concern.

Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

# Recommended Approach to the Ports of Auckland

**From the North:** Keep at least 5 nautical miles off land before entering the Hauraki Gulf through the Jellicoe Channel, passing midway between Cape Rodney and Little Barrier Island. Proceed southwards keeping at least 3 nautical miles to the east of Flat Rock and when in a position at least 2 nautical miles off Shearer Rock proceed along the white sector of the St Leonards Beach light to the Pilot station.

**From the East:** Enter the Hauraki Gulf through the Colville Channel keeping at least 3 nautical miles to the north of Channel Island. Proceed to a position at least 2 nautical miles off Shearer Rock then proceed along the white sector of the St Leonards Beach light to the Pilot station.

The routes should be reversed for departing vessels.

Other than for vessels calling at Great Barrier Island, it is recommended that passage through the Craddock Channel between Great Barrier Island and Little Barrier Island be avoided.

Vessels calling at Great Barrier Island should keep at least 2 nautical miles off Horn Rock.

Extract from Annual New Zealand Notice to Mariners. No. 10.



Harbourmaster recommended,  
safe navigational transit routes



Hauraki Gulf Marine Park  
Ko te Pataka kai o Tikapa Moana  
Te Moananui a Toi



PORTS OF AUCKLAND  
TĀMAKI HERENGA WAKA