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**WWF-NEW ZEALAND MEDIA RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Kiwis ‘frustrated’ at Government’s failure to protect ocean life, new poll reveals**

Independent polling revealing Kiwis’ concerns about the Government’s record on ocean conservation should be a ‘wake-up call’ for Prime Minister Luxon, says the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) New Zealand.

A new survey commissioned by WWF-New Zealand and conducted by Horizon Research looks at Kiwis’ attitudes to ocean protection and reveals that 81% of New Zealanders think Marine Protected Areas in Aotearoa should be expanded.

*'Concerned*', '*disappointed*', and *'frustrated*’ were the words people picked the mostwhen asked to describe their feelings about how the current Government is looking after the ocean and marine life – with almost half of New Zealanders (42% of those surveyed) ranking Government's record on marine conservation as 'poor' or 'very weak'.

WWF-New Zealand’s CEO, Dr Kayla Kingdon-Bebb, says the research demonstrates there is a clear political mandate to accelerate marine protection in Aotearoa - and the Government's failure to protect ocean life means it is ignoring the mood of the nation.

“The concerns we’re seeing from New Zealanders should be a wake-up call for the Prime Minister. Our ocean’s health is in crisis, we’re wildly off track to meeting the global goal to protect 30% of our ocean by 2030, and he’s failing the majority of Kiwis who clearly care about our marine environment and want to see it protected for future generations.”

Dr Kingdon-Bebb says the Government’s late-stage [decision](https://wwf.org.nz/news/oceans/hauraki-gulf-u-turn-betrayal-aucklanders) to allow commercial fishing in so-called ‘protected’ areas of the Hauraki Gulf - against expert advice and years of community work - is case in point.

“Tīkapa Moana is a taonga for New Zealanders and the local community and tangata whenua have spent more than a decade creating a plan to try and claw this biodiversity hotspot back from the brink of ecological collapse. The Coalition Government’s disgraceful pandering to industry at the eleventh hour is a betrayal of New Zealanders and completely undermines the purpose of having these safe havens for marine life in the first place.

“It’s clear that Kiwis want to see more protection for our marine environment and ocean health prioritised - but no new Marine Protected Areas have been created in years and now this Government wants to allow commercial fishers to ransack the few protected areas that have been proposed.

“The Prime Minister needs to be listening to the concerns of the people he’s been elected to lead, not just the industry lobbyists with the loudest voices,” she says.

Less than one percent of New Zealand’s ocean territory is in Marine Protected Areas, despite the Government committing to meet the global target of protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030. The survey shows that 79% of New Zealanders think New Zealand should honour this international commitment.

The survey also reveals that 71% of New Zealanders support setting up the Kermadec Rangitāhua Ocean Sanctuary – despite the Government [scrapping plans](https://wwf.org.nz/news/oceans/scrapping-kermadec-ocean-sanctuary-huge-blow-marine-protection) for this sanctuary last year. The sanctuary would have seen around 15 percent of New Zealand’s Exclusive Economic Zone protected and brought the country significantly closer to the ‘30 by 30’ target.

“The Coalition Government has abandoned the best chance we had to meet our international ocean commitments, and our Conservation Minister himself [has](https://wwf.org.nz/news/oceans/conservation-minister-slammed-branding-marine-protection-commitments-aspiration) made the outrageous claim that these targets are merely an ‘aspiration’. That’s a pretty clear signal from the Government about where marine conservation sits on the priority list, so, it’s really no surprise Kiwis are concerned and frustrated,” says Kingdon-Bebb.

The polling shows 91% of New Zealanders (the equivalent of around 3.5 million adults) say that the ocean is important to them, while 69% of Kiwis are concerned about the health of Aotearoa New Zealand’s ocean and threats such as plastic pollution, overfishing, and climate change. According to the report**,** 71% of New Zealanders think policies to protect the marine environment should be given top priority, or higher priority than they are given now.

“Kiwis are telling us that the status quo is not good enough. It’s time for Prime Minister Luxon to step up, realise Kiwis care about our ocean, and show New Zealanders that his Government is committed to looking after it,” says Dr Kingdon-Bebb.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

* The survey was conducted between 15-21 October 2024 among 1,049 adults nationwide who are members of Horizon Research’s HorizonPoll nationwide adult panel, the Horizon Research Māori Panel, and a third-party online research panel used for source diversity.
* The sample was weighted on age, gender, ethnicity, personal income, region and party vote at the 2023 general election to reflect the New Zealand population.
* The survey has a maximum margin of error, at a 95% confidence level of ±3% overall.
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