

Hon David Parker

Acting Minister of Conservation



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Media Release

Dolphins to benefit from further protection

New measures to increase protection of the unique Hector's and Maui's dolphins were announced today by Acting Conservation Minister David Parker.

"Hector's and Maui's dolphins are among the rarest in the world and we're privileged to have them here in New Zealand. We are stepping up to the challenge with a robust set of new protection measures that will improve the survival prospects of this distinct species," he said.

"The protection strategies are part of the new Hector's and Maui's Dolphin Threat Management Plan which has been carefully designed by the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Ministry of Fisheries to achieve the best possible outcome for the dolphins.

"Today I am announcing a Notice of Intention to establish four new marine mammal sanctuaries where seabed activities, like mining and seismic surveying, in key dolphin habitats will be restricted or managed.

"Regulation of seismic surveys and restricting sea-bed mining will reduce threats to dolphins. DOC will continue to work closely with Crown Minerals and with mining / petroleum interests to explore ways in which threats from these activities can be further reduced."

The four new marine mammal sanctuaries are in areas where the dolphins are known to frequently range - West Coast, North Island, Clifford and Cloudy Bay in Marlborough, Porpoise Bay/Fortress, Catlins Coast and Te Waewae Bay, South Coast. Alterations to the existing sanctuary at Banks Peninsula are also proposed.

"The Hector's and Maui's Threat Management Plan ensures the best combination of threat mitigation tools, both fishing and non-fishing, to protect these dolphins. The proposed non-fishing related protection measures will complement the fishing restrictions announced today by the Minister of Fisheries.

"This government is committed to ensuring that future generations can enjoy these beautiful creatures – these dolphins are only found in New Zealand waters, and Maui's are the rarest marine dolphin in the world."

Background information attached

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Background information

Both the Hector's dolphin, with an estimated total population of 7268, and the Maui's, with an estimated 111, are threatened with extinction. The Maui's dolphin is thought to be the rarest oceanic dolphin in the world.

Hector's dolphins are found only in New Zealand waters. They are the world's smallest marine dolphins and one of the rarest. There are two sub-species of Hector's dolphins – the South Island Hector's dolphin which is found around the South Island, and the Maui's dolphin which is found off the west coast of the North Island.

The Department of Conservation encourages commercial, non-commercial fishers and the public to report Hector's and Maui's dolphin sightings, incidental catch and beach cast carcasses to the nearest DOC office or phone 0800 DOCHOT line (0800 362468).

It is an offence under the Marine Mammal Protection Act 1978 for any person not to report the incidental capture of a marine mammal. Failure to report could result in a fine of up to \$10,000.