

Hon Jim Anderton
Minister of Fisheries
Hon Steve Chadwick
Minister of Conservation



Media statement

19 March 2008

New information to be considered for rare dolphins

New scientific information on Hector's and Maui's dolphins will be considered as part of a threat management plan on how to protect these dolphins, Fisheries Minister Jim Anderton and Conservation Minister Steve Chadwick said today.

The ministers said that new information has become available since the Government consulted with stakeholders on the plan in September and October last year.

Jim Anderton said the Government would seek comment from stakeholders on the new information over the next four weeks.

“The good news is that there will be more information for the Ministers of Fisheries and Conservation to consider when making their decisions. However, due to the consultation period, it will take another six weeks to get the information and stakeholder comments in front of the Ministers.”

Steve Chadwick said a lot of people were interested in the welfare of these dolphins, and had a stake in the waters that they live in.

“We want to make the threat management plan as transparent as possible, which means making all of the relevant information that Ministers will consider, available for people to comment on.”

The threat management plan attracted 2475 submissions late last year.

MFish and the Department of Conservation will continue to monitor compliance with existing set-net restrictions that are in place to protect Hector's and Maui's dolphins.

If a fishing-related incident occurred that required urgent action, the Minister of Fisheries has powers under the Fisheries Act to take action if necessary.

The new dolphin information is available on www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/consultations or contact Ministry of Fisheries, 04 4702600 to have a copy mailed to you.

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All ministers' media releases and speeches are posted at www.beehive.govt.nz

Background

At 1.4m long, the Maui's dolphin and Hector's dolphin is one of the world's smallest marine dolphins. The rounded dorsal fin is unique among all 40 species of dolphins and porpoises. Hector's dolphins live close to shore and are short lived (20 years). Over a lifetime a female will only produce a handful of calves. Such a low reproduction rate means Hector's and Maui's dolphin populations will be threatened by only a few more deaths each year than would occur naturally.

Current management of fishing threats

The Government has put a number of measures in place around New Zealand to reduce the threat of fishing to Hector's dolphins, including in the South Island:

- A Marine Mammal Sanctuary around Banks Peninsula
- A seasonal amateur set net ban between the Waiau and Waitaki Rivers (from 1 October to 31 March, out to four nautical miles from shore)
- A requirement for amateur fishers to stay with their nets when fishing at both Te Waewae Bay and Kaikoura (between the Waiau and Clarence Rivers, from 1 October to 31 March)

To protect Maui's dolphins in the North Island, commercial and amateur set netting has been banned between Maunganui Bluff (north of Dargaville) and Pariokariwa Point (north of New Plymouth), to a distance of four nautical miles offshore. Set netting has also been banned in the Manukau Harbour entrance.

Other human-induced threats to Hector's dolphins

Other human-induced threats to Hector's dolphins being investigated include marine tourism, vessel traffic, pollution, sedimentation, oil spills, plastic bags, marine farming, construction and mining, coastal development and climate change.

New proposed measures

The draft Threat Management Plan recommends a range of potential options for reducing impacts of human activities on Hector's and Maui's dolphins.

A range of options has been put together for each of the four dolphin populations:

- North Island west coast (Maui's Dolphin)
- East coast of the South Island (Hector's Dolphin)
- West coast of the South Island (Hector's Dolphin)
- South coast of the South Island (Hector's Dolphin)