

MEDIA RELEASE

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Peter Jackson wants his son to be the fifth generation West Coaster to be able to catch a flounder for his dinner.

Pam Goddard, 61, wants to set-net for mullet outside her Cornwallis home, as she has for 20 years.

Jackson and Goddard were amongst 50-odd people hot under the gills about the Government's set-net ban proposals who met at the Laingholm Village Hall last night. (SUBS: October 9).

The group overwhelmingly rejected the proposals because they say the measures would do nothing to help save the endangered Maui dolphin, the reason for the proposed ban.

Since 1921, just two Maui have been found dead within the Manukau Harbour. The one found closest to the harbour entrance was likely to have died from net entanglement. Many believe this dolphin was caught in a drift net around the Waikato River, floated on the northern coastal current and into the harbour.

Stan Turner, 82, of Little Huia told the meeting in 70 years of fishing he had not once seen a dolphin.

Ministry of Fisheries' (MFish) Richard Fanselow admitted: "We have had no reliable public sightings further in the harbour than the immediate entrance area. We've had no strandings ever of dead dolphins in the harbour."

Trish Rea of Titirangi said it would be unfair to impose further netting restrictions within the Manukau given the incomplete information.

"Fishermen spend hours near the water, they appreciate the environment and are concerned for the survival of Maui dolphin. Commonsense measures need to be applied to mitigate the threats to dolphins."

Questions were asked why MFish was not cracking down on the continued use of bulk-fishing methods in known dolphin habitat off the West Coast.

Fanselow said: "We know the dolphins go at least four nautical miles offshore, if not more than that. We know there is considerable trawling within that area along this coast."

Without firm evidence that trawlers were catching dolphins the Government would have a fight on its hands if they banned commercial fishing in that area, he said.

Pam Goddard said the proposals were unjustified as sustenance fishers were limited to one 60-metre set-net.

“Most amateur fishers only want a couple of fish for dinner. Shallow water set-nets are the only practical way to catch flounder or mullet. There is no justification for removing people’s right to feed their families when the facts do not support such draconian action.”

Experienced fishers agree with the Department of Conservation and MFish that information supporting the proposals is incomplete and the extent of the threats is highly uncertain.

The meeting called for DoC and MFish to finalise their research and provide more detailed information about dolphins, MFish to increase enforcement of existing regulations, improve public education and monitoring of activity.

“Given the amount of netting in all West Coast harbours, the impact of new measures will need to be weighed against people’s social, economic and cultural wellbeing. The adverse effects of shifting fishing effort to sensitive East Coast regions such as the Firth of Thames will also need to be carefully considered,” said Ms Rea.

The Ministers of Conservation and Fisheries are due to decide on the issue before the end of the year. Submissions on the issue close on October 24.

- Submissions can be freeposted to Jim Anderton, Parliament, Wellington or contact Pam Goddard.

<Caption>

Pam Goddard, 61, of Cornwallis questions why her 60m net set in the shallow bay should be banned when commercial trawling is permitted within known dolphin habitats.

<photocredit> Rosalind Le Bas Walker

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