

Hector Dolphin TMP Submissions
P.O. Box 11-146
Wellington 6011

23rd October 2007

E-mail: hectorstmp@biodiversity.govt.nz

From

Barry and Jeanette Mills
Mairangi Bay 0632

SUBMISSION

We are strongly against the proposal to move the present Set Net ban line further into the Manukau Harbour.

There is no proper scientific evidence to support any change to widen the Manukau set net ban area.

There is no evidence of set nets causing death to Dolphins in the Manukau Harbour prior to the ban or since the present ban was introduced.

Unfortunately since the present ban was introduced Dolphins are still being found dead on the beaches of the West Coast but none with any evidence of death by set netting. This is because set nets used within the sheltered shallow waters of the Manukau Bays have not contributed to the Dolphin mortalities even though nets have been set for more than 100 years. Persisting with this ban is like trying to fix something that is not broken while ignoring the real cause.

The tragedy is that while the authorities persist with a ban on inner harbour set netting the real contributor to Dolphin mortalities is not being addressed effectively, positively or aggressively.

Both DOC and MFISH seem to spend an inordinate amount of time establishing a position and then trying to justify it rather than trying to find something that can be proven would make a change if such an action was implemented. All efforts seem to be toward blindly mitigating risk and hoping some good may come. The Departments efforts to date have not helped reduce threats to the Dolphins. It is almost as if we have run out of ideas. We should act on what we do know and accept the abundant evidence that disease, genetic diversity, reproduction capability, harsh environment, and predation are, by far, more responsible for mortalities than fishing related activities within the Harbours. Certainly this is shown to be true in the North Island.

Considering there is no evidence of any Dolphin ever being caught in a set net in the Manukau Bays, then set net bans in these areas should be lifted. There is a complete difference between netting in the inner harbour bays and netting on the West Coast turbulent waters. Certainly there is no justification for further increases in the ban areas. The so called evidence of Dolphins in the Manukau Harbour reportedly identified by the POD technology is unsupported by scientific evidence and is tenuous in the extreme to the extent that this looks and smells like a red herring. It is especially noted that no visual sightings have been made within the Harbour coincidental with the time of POD strikes being recorded. Because Dolphins can only stay underwater for approximately 90 seconds it is not realistic to accept POD information when there have been no coincidental sightings which could be seen from the shore.

Having said all that, if we accept that there are Dolphins in the inner harbours, is that surprising, why would there not be, and if there are it's wonderful they come to a place where they are not harmed

and apparently have no fears. We have not caused them any harm, and we have proved we can co-habitate. We repeat, inner Harbour netting is completely different to coastal netting. Let's get more inspectors monitoring for possible illegal set nets and drift nets and vigorously policing with meaningful penalties.

It is claimed in the TMP that a new visual siting has been reported further within the Manukau Harbour than the area presently banned to set nets and that is justification to extend the Ban. This appears to be nonsense. Local rumour spreads details of this siting which are very concerning. Even though the writers requested by Email written information about this siting from Mfish nothing has been received after 7 days. One would be justified in thinking that such information, having been used in the TMP Document, would be readily available to be presented at a moments notice. We believe this siting has no merit, is weak, and, according to locals, very unreliable. Lack of response supports this concern also.

There clearly are signs of very concerning weaknesses in the Threat Management Plan theories.

In conclusion, we would like to:

1. Support continued set netting in the Manukau Harbour.
2. Support a Ban on all drift netting in all areas.
3. Support a Ban on all Trawlers from within 4 nm of the coast line and inside all Harbours.
4. Support the Departments to regularly and vigorously apply every effort to policing regulations covering Trawling and netting activities within and outside the coast line. (this is one positive solution).
5. Support the Departments to address and document the cause of every Dolphin mortality and be resourced to be pro-active instead of re-active as at present.
6. Restore inner Harbour set netting because there have been no contributing mortalities, and at the same time encourage the Harbour users (eyes and ears) to assist and support the Departments policies.
7. Do not support a Marine Mammal Sanctuary extending within the Manukau Harbour.

Yours sincerely,

Barry and Jeanette Mills