

Hokianga Accord Update #22

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Positive Progress at Whitiara Marae

The Hokianga Accord held its 13th overnight hui at Whitiara marae, Te Tii on the beautiful Te Puna Inlet, Bay of Islands. 85 people attended on Thursday 10th June. Representatives from Ngapuhi and Ngati Whatua as well as several other iwi and hapu were in attendance.

Thanks to their inclusive attitude, these iwi welcomed the support of representatives from the New Zealand Big Game and Recreational Fishing Councils, option4, Greenpeace, ECO, Guardians of Hawke Bay and a number of fishing clubs.

This Hokianga Accord hui was partially funded by the Ministry of Fisheries for which we are grateful. A big thank you to the Bay of Islands Swordfish Club for their generous contribution and the many people in attendance who provided a koha payment while giving their valuable time and energy. The option4 team who manned the kitchen delivered great food, on time and with a terrific attitude. Kia kaha!

Phil Heatley, the Minister of Fisheries, commenced his address with the reassuring assertion that the primary question that drives his decision-making is, "How does this decision affect the health of the fishery?" This drew warm applause.

When asked about making decisions when the science was uncertain, Heatley assured the hui that he would err on the side of caution.

After four years the Accord's contribution to fisheries management is finally going to be acknowledged. The Minister has made a commitment to formalise the forum's relationship with relevant government agencies.

Mr. Heatley also took the opportunity to discuss the Ministry's mātaimai proposals. He explained that MFish staff will no longer be promoting mātaimai to hapu and would not be assisting them with their applications, as they had done over the last few years. However, MFish will continue to process both current and future applications for mataitai.

This is of little comfort to the kaitiaki of Marangai Taiamai, who have spent many years struggling to achieve meaningful recognition of their sacred obligations to deliver kaitiakitanga in their rohe moana.

The Te Puna mātaimai application has received widespread support from the local community and various representative organisations. Sadly, one objection from a commercial Cray fisherman seems to be the only obstacle to the mātaimai being approved. Watch this space for developments on this mātaimai as they unfold.

In the context of data collection, and in response to questions about how he would provide for non-commercial fishing, the Minister explained that he first needed to know what those recreational and customary fishing interests were.

Phil Heatley explained that he was tired of the endless rounds of meetings that had gone nowhere during the last five years. He asserted the next three years would be decision-making years.

In his opinion, the industry had become bogged down by too much process and not enough action.

Last but not least, Mr. Heatley confirmed his intention to acknowledge the outcome of the

Kahawai Legal Challenge by reviewing the management of kahawai stocks in 2010.

Next month we will report on other matters discussed at the hui.