

## MID NORTH IWI FISHERIES FORUM OPPOSES MAORI FISHERIES TRUST ON FISHERIES AMENDMENT BILL

The Hokianga Accord, the mid north iwi regional fisheries forum, ratified calls for a more precautionary approach in fisheries management and opposes the argument to withdraw the Fisheries Amendment Bill from Te Ohu Kaimoana, the Maori Fisheries Trustee.

The intention of the amendment is to enable the Minister of Fisheries to take precautionary measures to ensure sustainability, if the available information is uncertain.

“Our position is clear. Food on the table for the whanau and our mokopuna must take priority over commercial interests. Ministerial caution when making decisions is in the interests of all sector groups to ensure ongoing sustainability of the resource,” said Te Runanga A Iwi O Ngapuhi representative, Paul Haddon.

Ngapuhi, New Zealand’s largest iwi, has been an integral part of the Hokianga Accord. The forum is dedicated to working on behalf of all New Zealanders to achieve the objective of *more fish in the water / kia maha atu nga ika i roto te wai*.

He went on to say that “Making allocation decisions without adequate caution would be counter-productive and in nobody’s long term interests. Our objective is supported by iwi and many recreational fishing groups, both Maori and Pakeha, who make up the Hokianga Accord. Ngapuhi believe that this approach is critical to its substantial commercial interests’ long-term sustainability. We will support measures that aim to improve abundance and achieve environmental sustainability for the wellbeing of all people.”

Mr. Haddon also pointed out that Te Ohu Kaimoana’s argument for the Bill to be dropped is flawed because past allocation decisions have resulted in fisheries not recovering quickly enough, meaning less fish are available when the public fish to feed their families.

“When Maori go fishing for a kai, 99.99% of the time we are categorised as recreational fishers. Iwi working closely with other recreational fishing groups is resulting in a valuable, ongoing working relationship.

“The Hokianga Accord is proof that when it comes to the sea both Maori and Pakeha want the same thing, improved fisheries, a healthy marine environment and increased understanding of the benefits of communities working together.”

A draft submission supporting the intention of the Bill was presented and debated during a recent Hokianga Accord hui held at Oturei marae, Dargaville. The forum expects any changes to the Act to be consistent with the recent High Court kahawai case that confirmed the Minister’s obligation to allow for both customary and recreational fishing interests, to enable people to provide for their wellbeing.

The precautionary approach (an internationally accepted standard) ought to help ensure sustainability and address the impacts of fishing on the aquatic environment.

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