

Hon Phil Heatley
Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture

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Media Statement

Iwi to discuss delivery of Aquaculture Settlement

Iwi are being invited to discuss how the Crown can deliver its obligations under the Maori Commercial Aquaculture Claims Settlement for new space created by proposed new aquaculture legislation.

Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister Phil Heatley says, the new Aquaculture Legislation Amendment Bill (No 3) is expected to result in the creation of more aquaculture space and this has a special significance for Maori.

"The Maori Commercial Aquaculture Claims Settlement Act 2004 gives iwi rights in respect of 20% of any new aquaculture space created since 1 January 2005. Councils must allocate authorisations for this space to Maori," says Mr Heatley.

Under the current system new aquaculture space can only be created by establishing or extending Aquaculture Management Areas (AMAs) defined in regional coastal plans. Unfortunately AMAs have not worked in practice. They have resulted in no new aquaculture space and are to be removed.

"As a consequence of proposed changes to legislation, the mechanism for delivering the Crown's new space obligation will also need to change," says Mr Heatley.

The Ministry of Fisheries is looking to engage with iwi through a series of regional hui. This engagement will focus on the Mandated Iwi Organisations recognised in the Maori Fisheries Act 2004 and the Maori Commercial Aquaculture Claims Settlement Act 2004.

The Ministry of Fisheries and iwi leaders have appointed a Technical Group to develop options for delivering the settlement. The Technical Group was chosen based on their expertise in aquaculture, resource management, policy development, local government processes, kaitiakitanga and iwi development.

The Technical Group has been considering mechanisms for delivering the Crown's obligations.

"Mechanisms might include provision of space or regional agreements. The latter may comprise of space, financial equivalent, a combination of the two, or any other resolution agreed by iwi and the Crown," says Mr Heatley

"It is up to iwi in each region to reach agreement with the Crown on how they would like to receive the settlement under the new regime, so they are able to maximise economic and social benefits as new marine farming space is created."

The Minister also assured the aquaculture sector that marine farmers will not be required to pay for the settlement.

"Whatever option is chosen, the Crown is committed to covering the cost of the settlement. I can assure marine farmers that they will not have to pay to meet the Crown's settlement obligations," he said.

Regional engagement hui will take place between 6-17 December 2010. Iwi feedback from these hui will be considered in the final report to Ministers. A Cabinet decision is expected in early 2011.

More information on the engagement process can be found on the Aquaculture Reform page of the Ministry of Fisheries website, www.fish.govt.nz

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