

NGATI WHATUA MEDIA RELEASE

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Ngati Whatua iwi said today it has serious concerns over the way lobby groups were driving Government environment policy and ignoring the effects on iwi.

The chairperson of Ngati Whatua, Naida Glavish, said the iwi was currently looking into the effects of a Ministry of Fisheries and Department of Conservation joint proposal for a threat management plan for Hector's and Maui's dolphins.

The plan has horrifying consequences for the iwi's commercial fishing prospects as well as most other iwi. This can be seen by looking at the detailed maps of the fishing closures and the estimate of their economic effects released by the New Zealand Seafood Industry Council today. The estimates include the loss of millions of dollars in fishing revenue, which will also reduce the ongoing value of the Maori Fisheries Settlement quota, loss of jobs and up to 200 set netters out of work.

"It's clear the influence that Forest and Bird, through their executive board member Liz Slooten, has had on this document. The document represents one of the most extreme marine proposals we've seen thus far in the name of protecting our natural resources and reflects the influence of environmental lobby groups on public policy", Ms Glavish said.

"The astounding thing is that the fishing industry has implemented measures to mitigate the impacts on dolphins and yet this proposal looks at a complete cessation of all inshore fishing around most of the country. It will have a colossal effect on Ngati Whatua, let alone the rest of the industry," she said. "To put forward these types of proposals on scant information and wrong assumptions demonstrates these government advisors have absolutely no idea how to save the Maui's dolphin."

For example, the proposal says there have been no verified reported sightings of these dolphins in harbours and yet it proposes a complete ban on all harbour set netting. The document states there have been four reported mortalities of Maui's dolphin since 2003 and that none of those deaths were attributed to fishing.

"So, as an iwi we ask: why punish us?" Ms Glavish said.

Options within the proposal are extremely draconian for the New Zealand fishing industry, in which Ngati Whatua has a sizeable investment from the Maori Fisheries Settlement. A complete ban on fishing in areas of commercial and non-commercial importance to the iwi will also rob our people of the chance to provide for food the table.

Ms Glavish said the fishing industry had already implemented extensive regulatory and voluntary controls to reduce potential impacts on Hector's and Maui's dolphin and, as a consequence of those measures or, as many fishers have noted, that they do not come into contact with dolphins at all, not one dolphin has been killed through fishing related activities for almost five years.

"Ngati Whatua will be making our concerns known to other iwi about the development of this policy and we will be opposing it on social, economic and cultural grounds," she said.