

Hokianga Accord Update #5

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Promising start to 2008

Christmas came early for the Ministry of Fisheries and mid north iwi Ngapuhi, Ngati Whatua and Ngati Wai. In mid-December a meeting was held to discuss how to break the impasse between the Hokianga Accord, the mid north iwi fisheries forum, and MFish. Stan Crothers (Acting Chief Executive), Jonathan Peacey (National Fisheries Operations Manager) and George Riley (Far north Pou Hononga) attended the meeting with iwi leaders and representatives.

After much discussion it was agreed by all to put aside past misunderstandings and work collectively to achieve sustainable fisheries in the north. A working group will be established to provide guidance for iwi and MFish, and will report the outcome to the wider Hokianga Accord iwi fisheries forum.

Issues of collective interest to all three iwi will be worked through the Hokianga Accord, with MFish providing assistance and resources. This agreement does not affect each iwi's right to deal with MFish on specific issues that affect them directly.

There is also a clear understanding that iwi can invite whoever they want to future Hokianga Accord hui. Since its formation in 2005, the forum has welcomed non-Maori participation in the ten hui held so far. Manuhiri (guests) such as the NZ Big Game Fishing Council and option4 have been most helpful and provided valuable information in an effort to achieve the collective goal of "more fish in the water/ kia maha atu nga ika i roto i te wai."

It is through these hui that we have come to realise the legal obligations of the Minister of Fisheries to provide for the input and participation of tangata whenua into fisheries management processes, and that the Minister has to have particular regard to kaitiakitanga (guardianship) when making decisions. While we are yet to see any tangible outcomes from having these statutory requirements fulfilled, this renewed support for the Accord's work is a step in the right direction.

Grappling with bureaucracy has never been easy so the opportunity to work together to achieve good outcomes for local, coastal communities, achieve understanding of each group's needs while improving the sustainability of our kaimoana has to be worthwhile.

Planning is underway for the next Accord hui being held in Whananaki, on the 3rd and 4th of April. One confirmed agenda item is an update on the Kahawai Legal Challenge appeal court case, due to be heard in late February. While a decision is not expected before the April hui it will be an opportunity to hear from people who attended the Wellington hearing.

The Accord will also be seeking answers to the ten questions sent to MFish after last November's hui at Waipapa. One major issue, as discussed in the previous update, asked where the \$17 million Deed of Settlement money set aside for Maori's involvement in fisheries management has been spent?

If you have not been to a Hokianga Accord hui please feel welcome to attend and participate. For more information contact Shelley Naera at shelley.naera@ngapuhi.iwi.nz, call her on 09 4010084 or visit www.HokiangaAccord.co.nz.